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ABSTRACT

Twenty-two local development projects for unemployed adults in England and Wales are described. Each was conducted during the first three years' operation of the REPLAN program funded by the Department of Education and Science, the Welsh Office, and the Manpower Services Commission. REPLAN aims to improve the quality, variety, and relevance of educational opportunities open to unemployed adults. The project descriptions are organized by geographic region. Each description states the project's global goal, specific objectives, monetary and educational staffing resources, activities, and outcomes, including "lessons learned" by those administering the project. Some of the projects' goals differed, but very often sought to help the unemployed (1) cope with unemployment; (2) improve their confidence and ability to seek employment; (3) consider getting more education; and (4) develop or preserve vocational skills. The methods/activities used to deliver project services often included informal education, community involvement, self-paced learning, and participant involvement in planning and running the projects' activities. (CML)

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LEARNING FOR A CHANGE

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

I am pleased to be able to present this booklet of short summaries of the work of some of the National Institute's REPLAN projects. Projects are only a small part of the REPLAN programme but in its first phase they have been its most visible manifestation and it is important that this report of 'work in progress' reaches a wide audience.

REPLAN has helped NIACE greatly in its efforts to keep in touch with and to work alongside colleagues throughout the adult continuing education field and the projects have, I believe, helped colleagues to explore new initiatives in their work in ways which would not otherwise have been possible.

This booklet is intended to be only the first of a number of NIACE REPLAN publications and I would like to thank all those – project workers, project sponsors, REPLAN Field Officers, Editor Joy Groombridge and the NIACE Publications Section – who have made its production possible.

Tony Uden
National Institute of Adult Continuing Education

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LEARNING FOR A CHANGE

Edited by Joy Groombridge

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Introduction

This first collection of reports of REPLAN local development projects represents a sample of a range of interesting and challenging initiatives undertaken during the first three years of the REPLAN programme.

REPLAN, funded by the Department of Education and Science, the Welsh Office and the Manpower Services Commission, is an educational programme aimed at improving and extending the quality, variety and relevance of educational opportunities open to unemployed adults. The programme comprises a number of key activities, organised on both a national and regional basis. These include work undertaken with Education Support Grant funding and co-ordinated by local education authorities; curriculum development projects in institutes of further and higher education, managed by the Further Education Unit; the production of learning materials by the Open University and finally, a broad programme of staff development, consultancy, practitioner support, dissemination, and local development projects, managed by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and co-ordinated through a team of field officers.

The local development projects, of which there were 46 in total in the first phase, are integral to the success of the programme. They provide a test bed for new ideas in approach, style of delivery, curriculum content and underlying philosophy. They are derived from an understanding of needs by grassroot providers and learners and in turn contribute to debate and to changing policy and practice. This is achieved through other aspects of the REPLAN programme – networking, training, consultancy and publicity, and through the immediate and local impact on sponsors themselves. The projects are intended as catalysts for change, as complements to, not substitutes for, established provision. They provide valuable opportunity for experiment and innovation alongside and associated with mainstream activity, as well as encouraging new styles and patterns of partnership between providers and students.

With the remit of the programme to work with both statutory and voluntary sectors a varied and imaginative pattern of projects has emerged. Funding has been granted to a wide range of agencies – Local Education Authorities, Colleges of Further Education, TUC centres, WEA Districts, University Extra-Mural Departments, informal community groups. This wide cross-section, embodying an even broader spectrum of educational approach, student group, purpose and net outcome, is one of the strengths of the project programme. It provides tangible evidence of the potential for exciting and widely varied provision as well as that for co-operation between providers, to build up a service that is relevant, interesting and attractive. Together, project sponsors shared a number of key concerns – for improved quality, for greater access, for more student involvement in designing provision and greater respect for adult learning needs and preferences and for an increase in the capacity of the educational service to create beneficial change, both for students and within the service itself. Individually, they addressed a number of issues. These include:

- *specific target groups* – rural communities, communities in run-down inner city areas and outlying estates, black communities;
- *styles of provision* – open learning, neighbourhood and self-managed learning, informal and modularised provision, incidental learning;
- *curriculum content* – non-traditional material, student designed courses, vocational and non-vocational material tailored to the students' needs and pace of learning, art, music, drama;
- *structure and organisation* – collaborative provision, partnership between student groups and providers, use of volunteers, essential support services including creches, counselling and guidance, outreach work.

Inevitably, as with all experimental work, problems develop. Sometimes these are flaws in the original concept which needs modification as the project develops, sometimes the outcomes are not as hoped, although the lessons are nonetheless valuable for all that. And sometimes, despite the problems, major, crucial and unexpected

possibilities are revealed. Sometimes this impact has most to do with a change in the students themselves, with a greater sense of power not just over the educational process, but over their own lives.

The implications for the education service are enormous. Already project work has forged structural links between providers that will enable better provision to develop in the future. Already staff training needs to meet increased and different demands are being addressed. Already the debate about what is possible or appropriate for unemployed adults is changing, as projects successfully pioneer new approaches and curricula. Perhaps most powerful outcome of all, students previously disillusioned by or indifferent to education have found a taste for learning and the ability to voice their needs. Consolidating these gains is the next step.

The lessons to be learned from each of the projects within this report are numerous and important to us all as adult educators. In brief, they concentrate on flexibility, variety and choice, on student participation and the need for building up self-confidence, and on the importance of support services which aid equality of access. They reveal the importance of local solutions to educational need, and the necessity for outreach work and co-operation with non-educational and other community agencies. They show that even with restricted resources, education used imaginatively can unlock enormous potential and that co-operation between providers is vital.

We hope you find the experiences recalled in the reports stimulating and useful. More importantly, we hope they will prompt you to take development risks yourself and to share your experience with others. Each account provides details of the time scale, funding and staffing levels of the project together with a synopsis of the aims, experiences and lessons learned. Inevitably much has to be left out in such a brief report and for each project there will be many perceptions of the work we have no space to include. Fuller reports of all projects can be obtained if requested. Details of the source are given at the end of each account.

● Margaret Purdey

1. University of Liverpool

Involvement with the creative arts

This project sought to explore the extent to which involvement in creative arts work would assist unemployed adults with no post-school educational experiences to clarify their individual and collective needs, and enable them to make a contribution to the community's cultural and intellectual development. The REPLAN initiative was targeted towards areas of Merseyside most afflicted by unemployment and concentrated its efforts on areas outside the inner city as they faced particular problems of access to educational provision.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

The project recognised that vocationally-specific training might be of limited immediate value in an area where the market could not at present absorb all those who were already skilled. As a result it was designed to investigate situations where the unemployed were offered rewarding and interesting opportunities in order to maintain or establish confidence and preserve skills, as well as to develop new interests and skills. It was anticipated that this would give the long-term unemployed the ability to cope better with their situation.

A REPLAN grant of £22,000 funded the project for two years. In addition to a full-time worker and some part-time hours, the project was designed to draw on the expertise of the full-time staff within the Department of Continuing Education, as well as working closely with other providers and organisations.

Unemployed writers making a programme for local radio. Replan Creative Arts Project, University of Liverpool.

EXPERIENCES

The project developed in a way that surprised many of those concerned with the original planning. It gained in strength and momentum over its two-year period and has been regarded by the people directly concerned as very successful. This success was felt to be the result of the informal method of operation. The flexibility of attitude within the project towards community-based education had interesting and significant results. The work done was in the non-vocational field of the creative arts, but the longer term results actually led to individuals gaining employment or directing themselves towards vocational and skill training. The premise that those involved would gain in their ability to cope with unemployment was proved right; but further than that, it was for many only the first step towards a more productive and fulfilled life.

The initial thrust of the project's efforts was at grassroot level in selected areas to try and interest groups of long-term unemployed adults in educational initiatives in the arts. Although the Department of Continuing Education offers educational provision over a large physical area, it actually only has premises in central Liverpool. It was hoped, and in fact with time it happened, that classes and groups would meet in the Department's buildings but the first contacts and developments had to be in venues in the areas involved.

So, initially, the project worker worked very closely with groups and individuals on the ground in the selected areas and estates. It was recognised that this outreach work would involve intensive and time-consuming informal contact-making and the setting up of small groups. But it was also acknowledged that the worker, in making these contacts, had to tread very carefully when first approaching people and organisations in the various areas. Easing provision in one venue, without full consideration by all involved, might have meant that future developments would be prejudiced due to the specific associations and allegiances of that particular organisation.

It was regarded as very important that there were regular and far-reaching consultations with other educational institutions as well as developing the active collaboration of unemployed people themselves and other agencies and interested parties. This multi-agency approach was a very strong feature of the project and many long-term links and

developments were made which, it was hoped, would continue after the project had finished.

This type of outreach work, which had in the long-term very positive and tangible results, required a tremendous amount of sensitive and time-consuming preparatory work. The initial contacts and working relationships required trust; and for there to be an increased awareness of educational openings, a lot of time had to be spent working with groups and individuals in helping them to become more confident and to identify with education in a general sense.

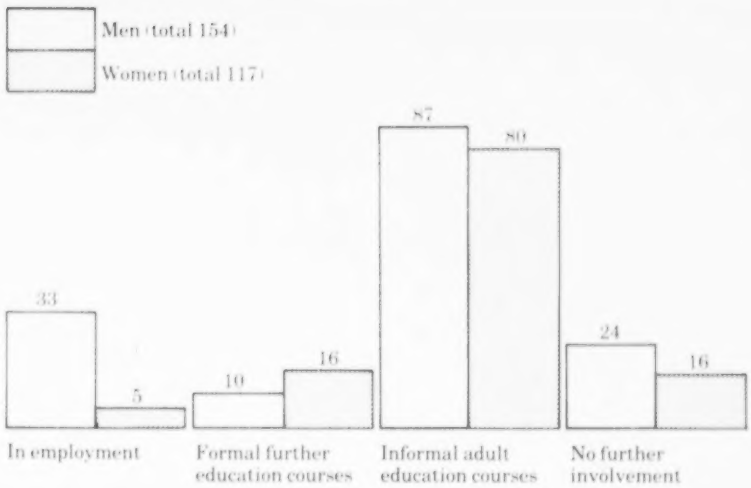
The proposed method of operation of the project was to establish a programme of linked discussions and courses, supported and underpinned by a variety of social studies, to enable participants to locate creative activities and experiences in a wider context. But in reality the project operated by responding to community needs as much as possible and although general discussion groups were run they tended to be the first step towards a more specific task. The worker established links with a group or individuals in the locality and with them explored the kinds of informal education provision available. These specific taks were organised for a finite length of time and with a definite aim, such as to make a video or run a short course on a certain subject. The worker would then talk through with the group the issues and problems that cropped up concerning returning to education or employment whilst the work of the group progressed.

LESSONS LEARNED

This project operated both directly and indirectly, but the indirect 'facilitating' role is hard to evaluate. One group involved directly in the project went on to establish a large Community Programme scheme for running a community nursery. This provided employment for a number of people and established a valuable and developing community resource. But this was *not* a direct spin-off from the REPLAN project, but the result of individuals gaining in confidence and ability through the project, thereby being enabled carefully and realistically to assess such opportunities and initiatives as starting a community nursery.

Throughout the project emphasis was placed on introducing the long-term unemployed to resources which allowed them to develop their interests within an integrated framework. This included access to other community education provision as well as more orthodox higher and further education.

The project did not attempt to offer employment possibilities and it came as a very unexpected and pleasant surprise when so many of those involved did find themselves work. Neither did the project actively explore Community Programme or Enterprise opportunities: these came as a natural result of increased confidence. And it was this



Further involvement of participants in Merseyside Creative Arts Project.

increased confidence of individuals and groups that became the hallmark of the project; through this personal development people felt able to seek and tackle further opportunities.

Over 270 people were involved with the project and, to the worker's knowledge, at least 38 have obtained employment; 26 have started on a formal course of education (including 2 women who have begun university courses through the Mature Matriculation scheme); and 167 people have been involved, usually for the first time, with further informal adult education provision. The setting up of Community Programme schemes brought employment to people who have not been directly involved in the project although the individual who developed the scheme had been.

An unusual aspect of the project's work was that many of the people involved were men, with an average age of 35 years. This is a group that is very under-represented in mainstream college provision. Very few of them had any post-school education and they had mainly been unskilled or semi-skilled workers before they had become unemployed. These are the people who find obtaining work in an area like Merseyside particularly difficult.

One of the most significant outcomes of the REPLAN project is that informal education provision, seen as non-vocational, leads to the people concerned gaining in confidence and making realistic choices about their future. It seems that the opportunity for people to get involved in this kind of project can lead to unexpected and surprising changes in outlook and attitude towards their situation. It is difficult to quantify clearly the long-term effects of involvement with this kind of outreach provision but a significant and substantial number of people involved with the project's work have benefited in the ways outlined in this report.

Further information from the Field Officer, North West Region.

2. Old Swan Technical College, Liverpool

Self-help and collaboration (1)

This project sought to marry the concept of self-help groups with the programme of a local technical college; to discover how college provision could be made more accessible to the long-term unemployed and to explore ways in which the College could play a more meaningful role in a community experiencing prolonged high levels of unemployment.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

The work of the project had three main strands:

- to ensure that existing provision within the College was fully accessible to unemployed adults. This involved close collaboration with other members of the College staff on recruitment and subsequent student support arrangements;
- to work with existing groups in the community, and to establish new groups, in order to assist members to identify and plan responses to educational needs, both in individual and group terms;
- to identify and respond to staff development needs emerging from the work described in order to encourage the continuation of the work once the period of funding ended.

A REPLAN grant of $20,000 over one year and ten months was used to pay for a full-time worker and some part-time hours for contact and group work as part of the outreach aspect of the project. Limited funds were provided for materials and for staff development for those members of the College staff who were associated with the project. Funding was not used solely for additional courses and classes for unemployed adults which would terminate when the project ended, but to assist the College to develop new approaches which could then be assimilated into mainstream provision.

EXPERIENCES

The project worker was engaged in an ongoing programme of outreach work intended to improve access by the unemployed to existing College provision. Chiefly this initiative centred on contacting community-based agencies involved with unemployed adults, reinforced by press and poster advertising. During the Summer of 1985 the project worker provided regular information and guidance sessions at the local Job Centre. This proved very successful in terms of contacting unemployed adults many of whom, when approached, were interested in what the College had to offer. In addition, outreach work was undertaken with young women using a local Youth Centre to try and find out what type of opportunities might be attractive to a group of unemployed people who were not participating in existing provision. This work led to the establishment of an unemployed group at the Centre and the setting up of a 'Women and Health Group'.

This aspect of the project's work led to the development of an extended network of agencies with which the College linked. These agencies went on to be used as locations for publicising College provision and the workers in these agencies were able to provide initial information and advice about what the College had to offer. But more than that, the agencies increasingly identified unmet educational needs and approached the College to make a response.

The project worked both with existing groups and with groups set up as part of the project itself. For instance, the project became involved with a writers' workshop which was already meeting at the College, and with a women's group which met in a local community centre. The writers' group offered some insight into the support needs of the sort of group which generates its own work in this way, and similarly the women's group helped the worker identify what kind of support they would like to see from the College. In this case the women felt that they were not able to 'keep up' with their children's progress at school and were keen for the College to help them by providing Maths and English sessions at the community centre where they met. These sessions were the forerunner of a more varied programme of activities undertaken by the members of the group, and it was interesting to watch how this group developed and made demands of the College as and when it needed to, instead of remaining as an outreach class.

In addition, two new groups were set up by the project worker, a Parenting Group and a Third Age Active Group. The College ran a playgroup for the children of its students and in discussion with these parents the project worker identified a variety of concerns under the heading of 'parenting', ranging from the care and development of small children, education and work opportunities for young people, to concern about drug abuse. The

project worker organised a meeting of parents who used the College playgroup and extended an invitation to other parents by a poster and leafleting campaign at local health centres and schools. At this well-attended meeting a wide variety of issues was raised and it was agreed that the College would organise further meetings at which visiting speakers would provide information on specific issues. The subsequent sessions increased the knowledge and awareness of group members and this was used as a basis for organising further group activities. There was a day conference on child abuse, and a number of members formed a support group to raise money for a local children's hospital. In addition to group activities individuals from the group took up more formal educational opportunities within the College; for example, two people took a school governors' course.

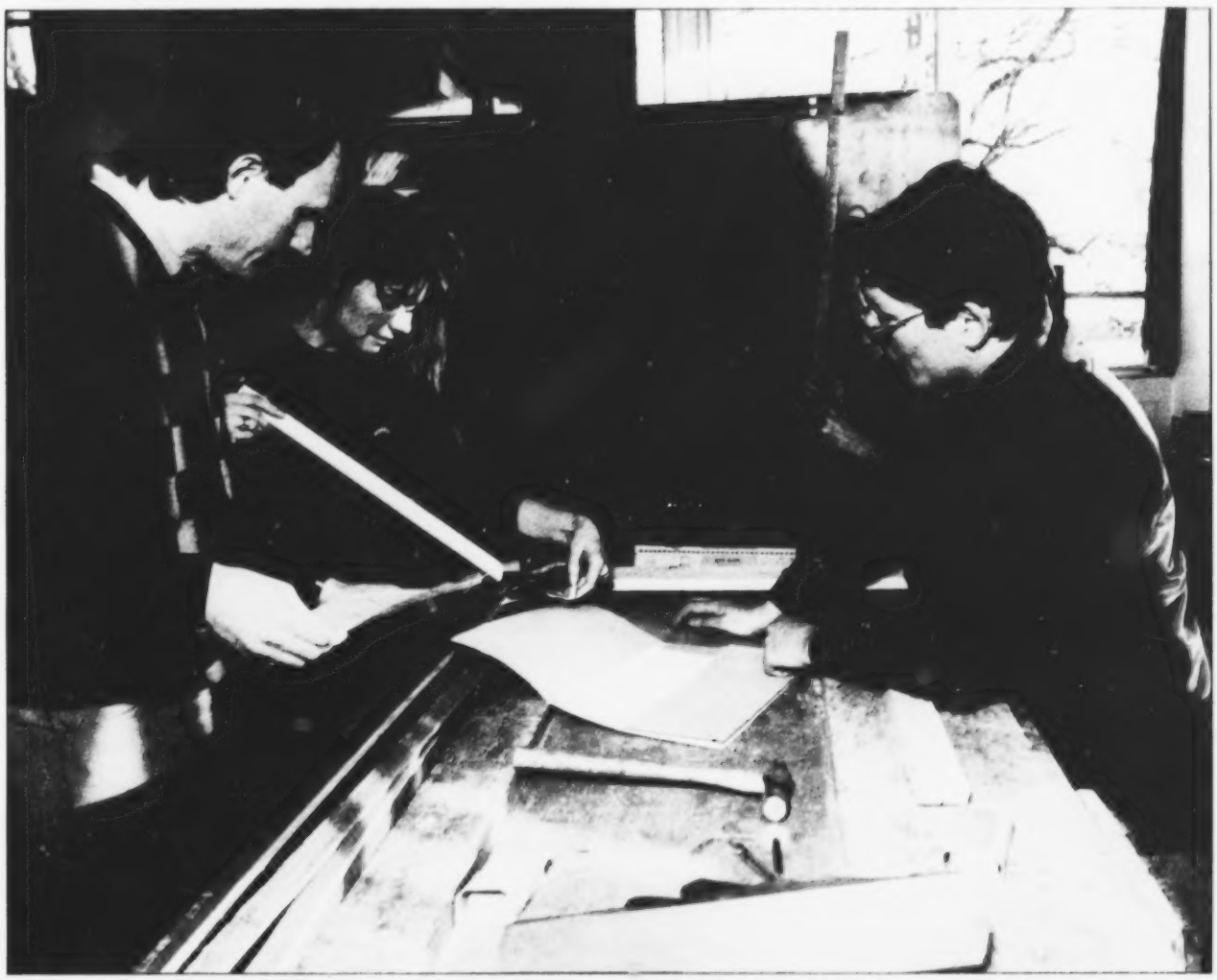
A similar methodology was adopted when the project worker was contacted by Age Concern in Liverpool about the increasing number of people under retirement age who had approached Age Concern for help or advice. The Third Age Active Group began to meet regularly, planned its own programme and made a number of demands on the College for more formal provision which was subsequently made available. This group, with College staff, organised a major regional conference on the issue of 'Education and the Third Age' which resulted in the establishment of both regional and local networks. These networks set about working out ways in which they could best develop and improve contact and appropriate responses to the needs of older unemployed adults.

LESSONS LEARNED

At the time of writing the project has yet to undertake a final evaluation but already some conclusions have emerged. The outreach aspect of the project's work suggests that, even in a College which makes substantial day-time provision for unemployed people, many more would participate if information and guidance were taken to them. It seems clear that for this to be done effectively, the College needs to develop good relationships with the numerous agencies working with unemployed adults in the community.

Further information from the Field Officer, North West Region.

Women's woodwork class at Old Swan



3. Horwich Unemployed Support Group

Self-help and Collaboration (2)

This project was a collaborative venture between an unemployed group and a college of further education which intended to develop appropriate educational responses to unemployed people in a town which had suffered the closure of a major employer, the British Rail Engineering Works in Horwich. Following the closure a number of men made redundant met together to consider ways in which they could respond to their own unemployment and that of others in the town. The Horwich Unemployed Group (HUG) was born. The group made contact with a wide variety of statutory and voluntary agencies in the community, and staff from these agencies formed the HUG Support Group. As a result of these meetings it was agreed that members of HUG would be trained to give welfare rights advice and that they would hold surgeries in local community settings.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

It became clear to the Support Group that numerous services, including education, were potentially available to assist unemployed people in the town but that many people were not aware of them; and also that some of the agencies concerned had not addressed the issue of relating to unemployed adults. Thus the Group approached NIACE for funding under REPLAN to assist them in developing and improving the service available to unemployed people. The Access Unit of Bolton Metropolitan College worked closely with the Group at this stage of the initiative and a successful proposal was made for a full-time worker plus a budget for part-time hours, materials and accommodation costs. In all, the project received a REPLAN grant of £34,500 for a period of 22 months.

EXPERIENCES

Initially it had been envisaged that HUG would rent premises and that the project worker would be based there. But premises proved impossible to locate and the College offered to employ the worker on behalf of HUG and to provide accommodation. The delay due to these problems meant that by the time the worker took up post the size of the Group had dwindled and only a hard core of about six active members remained. Thus the priority for the worker was to work with the existing members of HUG to undertake an extensive outreach exercise to discuss with the unemployed people in the town what services they wished to see developed and what activities they would like to be involved with. This outreach campaign comprised extensive house-to-house visiting, surveys conducted at the Unemployment Benefit Office, press and leaflet publicity, and a variety of 'taster' activity sessions organised in community centres in the town. As a result of this activity the number of unemployed people loosely engaged with the project grew, but the number prepared to be actively involved in the running of HUG only increased slightly.

The project set up a Management Committee made up of representatives from the College, HUG itself, the Church and the REPLAN Field Officer. This group agreed that it was important for the project to have a permanent base and hence a more obvious presence in the community. The project worker was successful in obtaining premises on the British Rail site and also in raising additional money from Bolton Metropolitan Council and from Greater Manchester Council to refurbish and equip the premises. This was a bench mark in the development of the Group as they now had a base from which to operate and they began to believe that they could really do something.

The project worker tried to involve the members of the Group in the acquisition of premises and raising of additional funds but the need to act speedily meant that in fact the project worker did most of this himself. Thus it was agreed by the Management Committee that it was a top priority to use some of the part-time hours to organise a training programme for the unemployed Group which would assist them to plan and implement their own activities. A number of sessions were organised which covered topics like agenda setting, committee skills, financial planning, budgeting, bookkeeping, task allocation and review, and preparation of funding proposals. It was hoped that by the end of the project HUG would be confident enough to manage its own affairs and to determine its own future. Substantial progress was made and members of HUG became involved with the project worker in all aspects of the work.

In November 1986 the project opened its premises and offered a programme of structured activities as well as a tool library. The advice sessions continued in a variety of venues. The activities offered were those which people had said interested them during the outreach phase of the programme and these included creative arts, DIY, gardening,

carpentry and motor vehicle skills. Efforts were made to establish a creche but this proved difficult on an industrial site. The women members of the group set up a toy library in a local church hall on an outreach basis in an effort to involve other unemployed women, but without successful creche provision the project was not felt to be effectively available to unwaged women.

LESSONS LEARNED

It is still very early days in the life of this project but Group members hope it will be possible to develop community business initiatives at the project. Similarly they envisage the project as a base from which some unemployed people will take up formal education and training opportunities available in the town. The College provides a useful source of expertise in terms of part-time teachers for specific activities and College staff continue to offer free consultancy services to the Group on legal and business development issues. The College has also agreed to allocate a number of part-time hours to the project once the REPLAN funding ends and a variety of discussions have taken place to secure continued funding for both the premises and support staffing for the project's future.

Further information from the Field Officer, North West Region.

4. Sunderland Local Education Authority/University of Durham

Reach Out

Sunderland, now part of the Metropolitan County of Tyne and Wear, has an unusually high rate of unemployment. In some parts of the town, male unemployment exceeds 50%, and in the area as a whole over 45% of people unemployed have been out of work for over a year. A high proportion of the work force is unskilled or semi-skilled, for whom job opportunities are already limited and further threatened by new technology. Over-dependence on traditional manufacturing industries, together with a lack of private sector investment, make economic prospects bleak. This is the background to Reach Out, a joint project of the Sunderland LEA and the Department of Adult and Continuing Education at the University of Durham. The emphasis is not on helping the long-term unemployed to learn new skills, but rather to enable them to develop alternative interests. The part of the town where Reach Out operates is made up of council estates on the north side of the River Wear, some recently built, others older – once villages, but the majority of the original private housing had become derelict, been demolished through slum clearance schemes, and replaced by more council property. On the newer estates there is a high proportion of young people: in some places, up to 50% of the population is under thirty. Within this age group there are many single-parent families.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

The aims of Reach Out may be summarised as follows:

- to work with people who would not normally use already-existing adult and continuing education opportunities;
- to give unemployed people the opportunity to develop skills and interests whether or not directly related to job opportunities;
- to attempt to dispel some of the inevitable loss of self-confidence and motivation experienced through long-term unemployment;
- to arrange courses specifically to meet people's needs and ideas in accessible, more acceptable and informal ways.

A REPLAN grant of $38,000 was originally intended to fund a two-year project running from October 1984 to September 1986, but difficulties in establishing the work and the resignation of the first Development Officer appointed meant that the project was effectively reduced to eighteen months.

EXPERIENCES

The second Development Officer adopted three main methods of work: through already existing agencies in the project area; through voluntary groups; through face-to-face encounters with local people.

Other agencies – Where courses were arranged jointly with workers in other agencies, the Development Officer took part in discussions with the agency worker and with the intending students to decide structure, length and content of the course, and helped to secure a tutor and purchase any necessary equipment. Once the course had been set up the agency worker took over, and was responsible for feed-back to Reach Out. Before the end of each course, time was put aside for evaluation.

Voluntary groups – Work with voluntary groups involved a higher level of commitment and time. The Development Officer made contact with members of groups, often on a one-to-one basis, drawing together people with common interests from the whole area covered by Reach Out, and arranging with them a time and a venue suitable to the majority.

In all, 24 courses were started. Subjects included toy-making, pottery, cookery, fitness and health, dressmaking, photography, computers, woodwork and basic maths. Each course was run very informally. The relaxed atmosphere allowed students to work at their own pace and level. Students frequently moved from one Reach Out course to another. As there was a deliberate lack of obtrusive administrative structure, there were no registers and no weekly records of attendance, but the tutors noted that between 280 and 300 people used Reach Out courses during the project's existence. Wherever possible, tutors appointed had a good background knowledge of the area and its people. Occasionally students suggested as a possible tutor someone they already knew. Qualifications were not of the highest priority, but an ability to pass on skills – and teach others how to do this – was. The ages of students ranged from 20ish to 68, and a high proportion of them were women. Students throughout saw the provision being on their own estates as an advantage and readily commented that 'going to a new place was the biggest put-off'. They

welcomed the opportunity to try things out in their own neighbourhood.

Face to face work – A considerable amount of time was spent knocking on doors and talking to people in the street – a long and very slow process of getting people interested. Listening was one of the most difficult parts of the work: great care had to be taken to create a balance between being 'an ear' for people whose lives were sometimes very isolated, and discussing with them the opportunities available. Care and tact are of the utmost importance if people who have never previously considered further education as something for them are to be encouraged to believe in their own ability. Eventually a small group of women got together, meeting occasionally in their homes, to discuss problems caused by unemployment and other topics, usually those raised by the media. These discussions were difficult to guide and continually wandered back to personal problems, but did succeed to some extent in raising awareness, though none of the women developed enough confidence to go on to further their own education.

The project was responsible to a Steering Group made up of people from Sunderland LEA, Durham University and representatives of other further education bodies in the area. In the course of the projects many links were made with other agencies – to the mutual benefit of all concerned. Information, feedback and resources have been shared, facilities offered free of charge, and students enabled to move freely from one agency to another. The Educational Support Grant (ESG) Worker was also responsible to the same steering committee, and has also been working to develop links and break down barriers between further education and the unemployed.

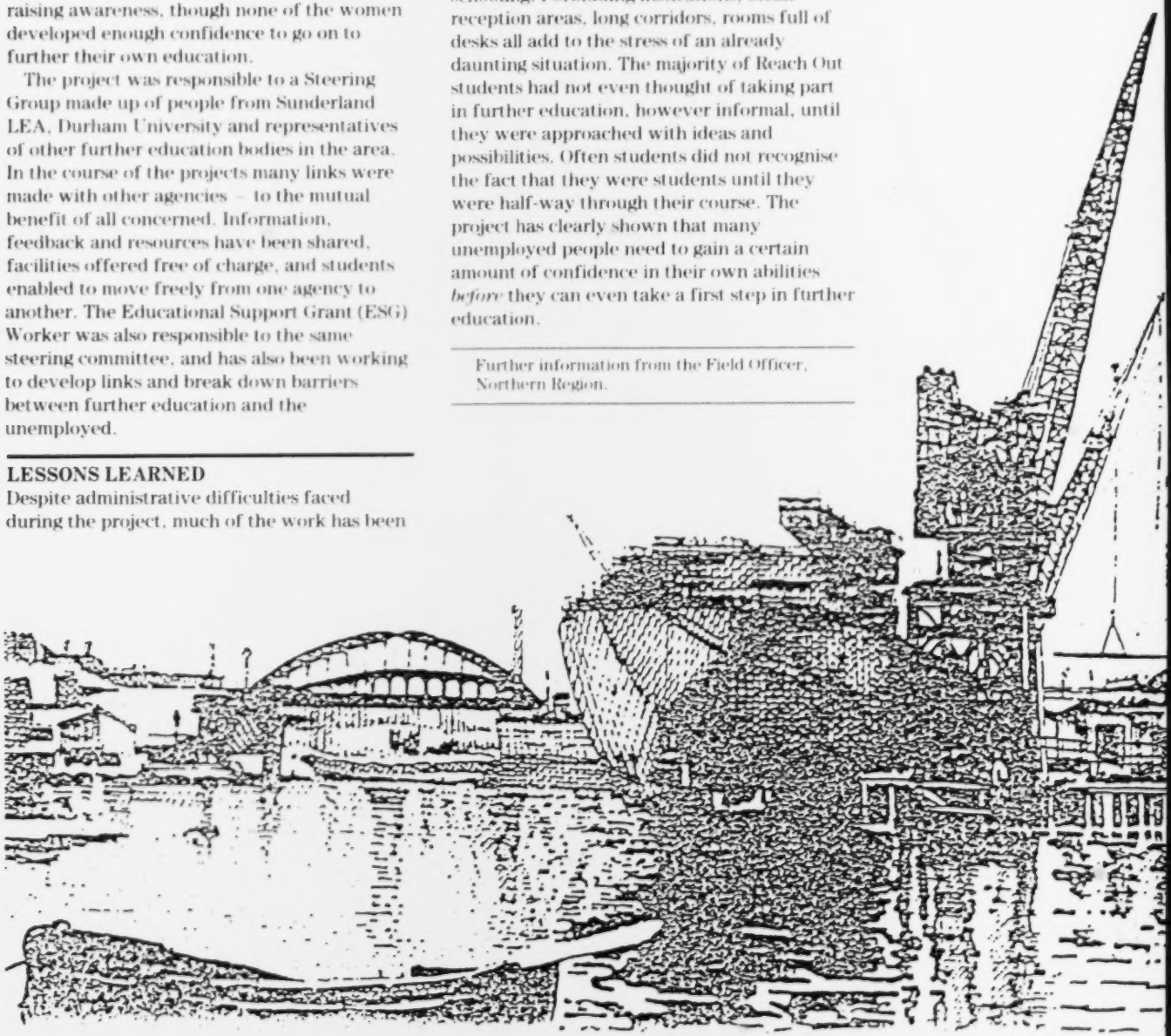
LESSONS LEARNED

Despite administrative difficulties faced during the project, much of the work has been successful, though inevitably – when faced with the magnitude of Sunderland's problems – on a very small scale.

Of the 24 courses started by Reach Out, 15 are continuing in one form or another, either with other sources of funding or on a voluntary basis. Of the courses not continuing, three have merged with other sessions held in the centres where they were based, two have ceased for lack of interest, and the remaining four were courses of a set length and specific purpose for which no continuation was expected.

The project has served to point a way forward for the development of education for the long-term unemployed. Wherever possible, providers of courses for these people should consider arranging 'taster courses' in the students' own areas and not necessarily during the academic term. Erosion of confidence is one of the main results of unemployment: users of the project have constantly shown a dislike of anything which revives memories of schooling. Forbidding institutions, bleak reception areas, long corridors, rooms full of desks all add to the stress of an already daunting situation. The majority of Reach Out students had not even thought of taking part in further education, however informal, until they were approached with ideas and possibilities. Often students did not recognise the fact that they were students until they were half-way through their course. The project has clearly shown that many unemployed people need to gain a certain amount of confidence in their own abilities *before* they can even take a first step in further education.

Further information from the Field Officer, Northern Region.



5. UCANDUIT/WELL

Neighbourhood learning in an inner city

The UCANDUIT WELL project is based in the inner West End of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Parts of the neighbourhood served are the Elswick, Benwell and Cruddas Park wards of the city. Here, male unemployment is around 70%. In the context of Newcastle's adult education provision, this project is unique, since it is organised and managed by members of the local community on a genuinely democratic basis, and consequently is responsive to the needs of the local people.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

The project's aim is to promote access to a range of learning opportunities, often on a self-help basis, for individuals who tend not to participate in traditional adult education. Unemployed local residents are encouraged, as fas as possible, to take control of what they learn, and where, how and when they learn it.

The project received a REPLAN grant of $47,500 over a period of two years and three months. One full-time project worker was shared between the WELL (West End Leisure and Learning) Centre and the MSC-funded UCANDUIT project.

EXPERIENCES

The project worker has contacted local residents through a variety of methods: word of mouth, publicity in newspapers, leaflets and on the radio, and the use of existing social-community networks.

The Women's knitting group at WELL

Some examples of work done

1. The project has organised a number of training events with community organisations – for instance, a day school on 'How the Council Works'. Twenty people were recruited, all of whom were involved in community organisations such as tenants' groups, welfare groups, and play groups. The tutoring input was provided by the Law Centre, and the project dealt with the publicity and recruitment of local people.
2. A Community Association, which had been recently formed, asked for support from the project. The initial contact was made by a member of the Association, who arranged a number of meetings with the project worker. The members soon began to voice their views of adult education. Initially they thought that it had nothing to offer them: 'Adult Education! You've got to be joking. Not for us.' Or 'It's only for people at College.' The project and the Association planned a residential weekend on the following themes: 'What are the needs of the neighbourhood?' and 'Priorities for the Association. A course of action.'
3. The project has developed a network of contacts within the Asian community. It has closely collaborated with the recently formed Asian Women's Centre. Other organisations involved are the two local Priority Area Teams, a local school, and the LEA adult education outreach project. The management committee and workers composed of Pakistani and Bengali women together followed up the following themes: adult education classes and childcare, interviewing procedures, bookkeeping, and childcare training (for Asian women with a local nursery school).
4. The project identified a group of volunteers who had a variety of skills but found it difficult to teach these skills to others. The project worker contacted the local College of Arts and Technology to develop a course on 'Practical Skills for Volunteer Tutors.' Tutors and funding came from the College under the SCOPE (MSC-funded) programme, and as a result a number of the participants have been employed as paid tutors. Others have joined the City and Guilds FE Teachers Certificate Course.
5. The project has worked with two schools on a gardening project. This involved parents, teachers and children learning about

different aspects of horticulture. This activity was so successful that it developed into a cookery class using the produce grown. The project's contact with the school made it possible to recruit one of the parents to manage this work.

6. A local librarian contacted the project to offer adult education in the library. This led to two courses on 'Trace your Family Tree'. Thirty local residents joined. The project supported the courses with tutors and child care. The library service dealt with the publicity.

LESSONS LEARNED

To work successfully with established community groups requires time and trust on both sides. After a period, the groups begin to see adult education as the appropriate agency for support in a variety of ways. There is more to be done in working with the local College. To date the project has collaborated with the College at a number of different levels, and has College representation on the project committee. In this way the community has more access to College resources, and the College courses for the unemployed. There has, however, been a limit to the extent the community can use the College. For instance, attendance is inhibited by lack of creche facilities, and better transport facilities are needed to encourage less confident residents. Unfortunately the College has no outreach staff to develop a community education programme with the voluntary sector, but the project is encouraging the College to develop an outreach policy.

Generally speaking, many of the project's courses and activities are organised on traditional adult education lines in their ten week structure; users tend to stay within the one activity. This can create too much reliance on the tutor, with classes becoming inward looking. So it is important to choose tutors and creche workers carefully, and incorporate some kind of self-help component into the course plan. (For one example of this, see the note on Elswick Drama Group).

Tutors working in a community setting really require specific training. Basically they need an ability to work in open-ended situations, have group management skills, and be able to record community development.

Over the latter period of the project, the management has seriously started to look at evaluation, and the sort of feedback wanted from the tutors. The project is developing monitoring systems with the tutors, profiling individuals and groups, and observing users' changes of attitude.

Although most of the activities organised have been successful, the project has tended to recruit individuals and groups who are already in contact with the networks. Users have tended to be female and – with the exception of a few groups of Asian women – predominantly white. The women have been

A computer is only one of the facilities on offer at UNCANDUIT

relatively easy to recruit from play groups, schools and community group settings. However, recruiting men, particularly young men in their 20s, has proved difficult. Young men do not use the existing neighbourhood centres. What seems to be needed is a team of part-time workers who could contact people in their own environments and on their own terms.

A recent development that the project worker has helped to initiate with the local Priority Area Teams is a short term (one year) Action Research Project on a local estate. Funding is to be sought from other Priority Area Teams and voluntary organisations and College of Arts and Technology. It is hoped that this type of provision will give young adults the opportunity to change from aimlessness to short-term activities of their own choice.

Further information from the Field Officer, Northern Region.

Elswick Drama Group

This is a group of local residents who participated in an 'acting skills' course organised by the WELL UCANDUIT project. The course, which had a self-help element to it, ran for 15 weeks. It entailed the following work: Slapstick improvisation, mime, voice control, dramatising Geordie songs, writing a script for a puppet show.

MEMBERS' COMMENTS

'I was really shy at first, but then I noticed everyone was the same, so I had a go.'

'I enjoyed the improvisation but found some of it difficult. I don't like farce, it's not my kind of humour.'

'I think 'Acting Skills' is very good, and I enjoy it very much. The only problem is that periodically you feel such a fool.'

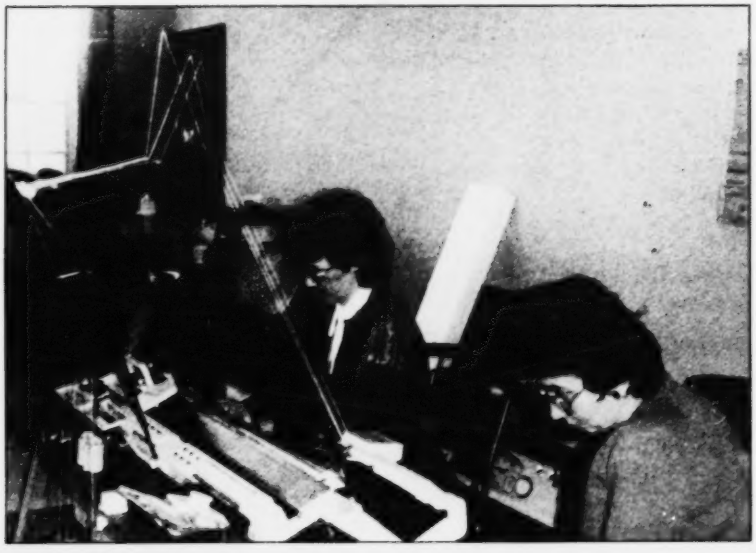
'I found difficulty with other people being inhibited.'

After the course finished, the class became self-supporting and has developed into the Elswick Drama Group. The group are actively fund-raising and seeking financial support from Priority Area Teams and trusts.

6. Tyneside Women's Employment Project

New opportunities for unwaged women

Tyneside Women's Employment Project was established to develop educational opportunities for women who would not normally have been attracted to or encouraged to participate in traditional forms of provision. This REPLAN project was designed to complement the skills-training component of TWEP. The geographical area of the project was originally meant to include Newcastle, Gateshead and South Tyneside, but as the greatest areas of 'need' were found to be south of the river, development work focused here.



Knitting class at TWEP

AIMS AND RESOURCES

In devising the project, six main aims were identified:

- To encourage women to consider 'education' as a possible option in their lives;
- To work with women on their own terms, and at their own pace. This meant a good deal of contact with existing agencies not primarily established for educational purposes – for instance, playgroups, health groups, rape crisis centres and women's refuges;
- To identify the educational needs of unwaged women in the Tyneside area – by personal interviewing;
- To provide appropriate and realistic education and training opportunities for unwaged women – if existing provision was not available, appropriate or accessible;
- To encourage existing providers in the voluntary and statutory sector to improve their provision and to provide the necessary support systems such as creche facilities;
- To offer staff training to those providers who would like to increase or improve their existing provision.

The project received a REPLAN grant of $29,000 over a period of two years and three months.

EXPERIENCES

There were two main strands to the work, the first involving the women themselves, and the second influencing the main providers of adult education in the area.

To make contact with women who might not previously have considered returning to learning as an option for them, several approaches were used.

1. *Outreach* This involved interviewing and door-knocking on council estates to determine local needs, and possibly establish mutual support groups.
2. *Women's groups* The project offered to provide information sessions for existing women's groups. For example, there was a session on 'Stress' in a Women's Health Group, and on 'Pre-Menstrual Tension' at the Women's Refuge.
3. *Other agencies* The project also offered information sessions to other agencies. For example, there was a session on 'Women and Training' at a local Parent Teacher Association meeting and in a college SCOPE course.

The other part of the work of the project was to influence existing providers, and to raise their awareness of the needs of unwaged women. Issues relating to learning opportunities for women were included in staff training sessions in local colleges, schools and polytechnics. Information sessions on the issues concerned were offered to officers of the local education authority and to local politicians. A newsletter offering support and information was circulated to a range of providers in the area. Finally, with a view to encouraging the colleges to provide creches after the project was over, the project offered to run creche sessions in exchange for tutor sessions.

In the course of the project, many other

institutions and organisations were involved.
In the statutory sector:

Newcastle Polytechnic and Sunderland Polytechnic;

The Extra-Mural Departments of Newcastle University and Durham University;

Newcastle College of Arts and Technology;

Gateshead Technical College;

South Tyneside College;

Local schools, Youth and Community Departments in South Tyneside College Gateshead Technical College;

Social Services Department;

Housing Department;

Manpower Services Commission – CP SCOPE VPP RESTART ESF – Skill Centres

In the voluntary sector:

Gateshead Voluntary Organisations Committee;

Women's Health Projects;

Rape Crisis Centres;

Women's Refuges;

Law Centres;

Citizens' Advice Bureaux;

Young Women's Christian Association;

Workers' Educational Association

LESSONS LEARNED

The project showed that when developing work with women, there is a need to operate at two levels: at the provider-policy making level and also at the grass-roots level. TIME is the key issue, and a sensitivity of approach is crucial.

Further information from the Field Officer, Northern Region.

Providers of adult education in the Newcastle area get together to show what's on offer to unwaged women.

7. Workers Educational Association, Northern District

Workers' education for the unemployed

Wansbeck is a district of South-East Northumberland. Its major town is Ashington (population: 22,713), which is still very much a pit town, and famous for its forty-odd Working Men's Clubs, and for being the birthplace of the Charlton brothers. There are two other small centres of population: Bedlington and Newbiggin. Ashington is also noted for having a very large working class population: car ownership of only 47%, and unemployment at 19%. Until the coal strike there was quite a large division between the relatively well-off employed population, and the unemployed. The strike changed all that, and many of the debts incurred during that period still remain. The long-term community effects of the strike are still to be assessed, but the local pits are now closing fast, and redundancies are mounting. In short, the area can be described as combining Northumbrian remoteness with inner-city problems.

Ashington has a rich pre-war tradition of WEA adult education, but this declined by the 1960s, and when the WEA's project began most of the formal adult education was being carried out in the statutory sector. The local high schools run successful craft and hobby courses, and the Technical College, which used to be full of Coal Board apprentices, now runs a variety of vocational and MSC courses.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

The Wansbeck WEA/REPLAN project aims to bring non-vocational adult education to unemployed people in Wansbeck. It recognises that community penetration is crucial if working class people are to be reached, and has sought to use people's own communication channels to do this. It has tried to develop education appropriate to the needs of working class unemployed people by negotiating the curriculum with them.

A REPLAN grant of $41,500 funded the project for three years.

EXPERIENCES

The WEA project has been fortunate in receiving excellent co-operation from local, voluntary and statutory services. It is housed in a TUC Unemployed Centre (the Community Initiatives Centre, abbreviated as CIC), which also runs a Co-operative Development Agency. It has free use of local schools, and all kinds of *ad hoc* support from the District Council. The WEA's Northern District office organises payments to tutors, insures the project's creches, and carries out a number of other similar vital administrative tasks. The project worker, who is half-time, with a four-hour-a-week secretary, can put most of her effort into organising and teaching the courses.

There have been two different approaches. First, there is a 'normal' WEA programme of liberal adult education, and the main task here has been to facilitate access by unemployed people. Second, the project has developed courses of various kinds with unemployed groups.

The liberal programme has been largely successful in three areas: creative writing, women's studies, and computing. Most of these courses have been run in response to requests from the Wansbeck Branch of the WEA. Using the REPLAN funding, it has been possible to offer these courses free to unemployed people, and to offer creches with them. Economics generally forces the WEA to charge for its liberal programme, and only to run creches when they are economically viable. The flexibility which REPLAN funding has provided has meant that these courses have not been constrained by budgetary considerations. Consequently, large numbers of unemployed women and men have been attracted to them. Creche provision, in particular, has been crucial, and the project has been fortunate in being able to use the CIC's creche facilities while it has paid for creche workers.

The liberal programme is offered to the community-at-large. Students are recruited to these courses by press publicity, leaflets in public buildings, and by targetting mailings to specific groups. The project worker felt, though, that if it was really to reach working class unemployed people, discover what their needs were and how they could be answered, the project should use the communication channels that working class people themselves use. The writings of Tom Lovett were very influential to the approach here. The project worker began to put out feelers into tenants' groups, single parents' groups, trades unions, and other working class organisations. In meetings with these groups it was made clear that the project's resources were available to them. Much of this work was done informally, over coffee, or in pubs and clubs. The Secretary of the Wansbeck Branch of the WEA had built up a lot of credibility with local people in recent years by involving himself in

many forms of community activity, and his personal standing among local people has meant that they have been prepared to try out adult education when many of them have not experienced education at all since school. Groups that the project has worked with are shown on the chart. They have requested two types of courses: first, courses that they have developed an interest in for some reason (examples are 'Nutrition for the Single Parent' and 'Do-it-Yourself'). Second, and overwhelmingly, they request courses on communication and organisational skills to help them operate more effectively. The WEA is constantly asked for courses on running meetings, group dynamics, priority setting, counselling, welfare rights, public relations, assertiveness and empowerment. The project runs them for voluntary workers, Community Programme workers, counsellors (eg. in the Women's Health Advice Centre), and tutors too.

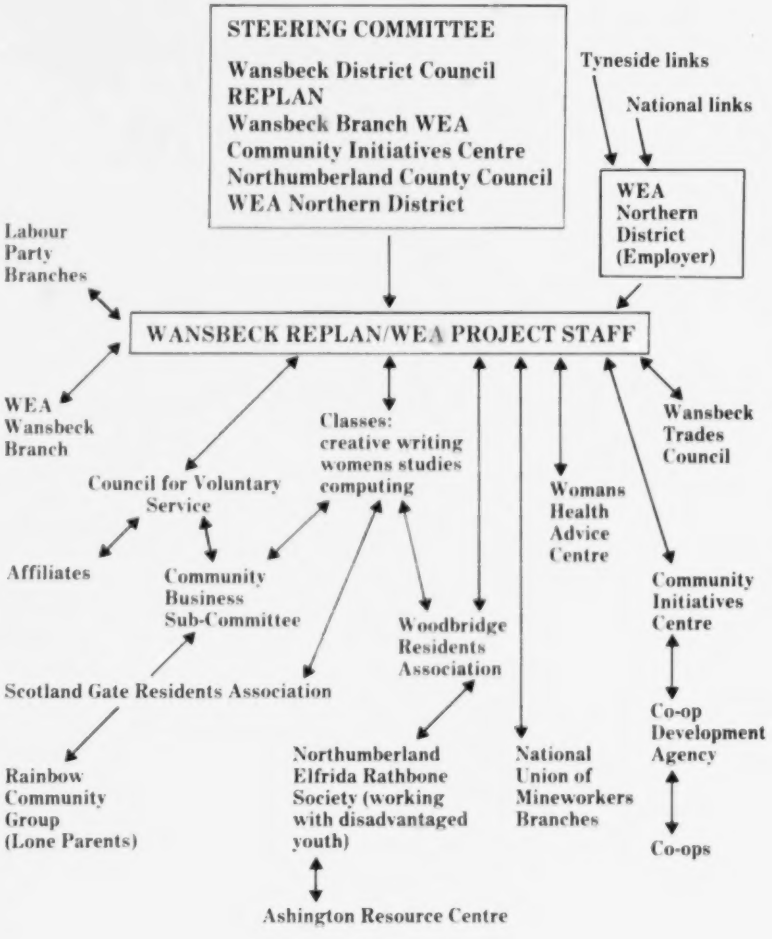
LESSONS LEARNED

These courses have enabled groups and individuals to make demands upon both the voluntary sector and statutory sector services. Students are doing such things as running their own community house, establishing small businesses, getting involved in committees, and asking questions of the local authority regarding housing, leisure services, economic development, and sex discrimination in education. Students designed their own syllabus for a weekend residential course on 'Community Management'.

In all these courses the emphasis has been on quality of education (the project has developed an evaluation scheme and checklist), negotiation of the curriculum, and genuine democratic control. The education has been informal, participative and problem-centred. Above all, it has focused on the students' own experience of unemployment and working class life. In studying their own traditions and culture, working class people may come to an understanding of what they value in their lives, and begin to take control of them.

Further information from the Field Officer, Northern Region.

WANSBECK PROJECT: NETWORKS



8. Leeds Local Education Authority

Outreach to the long-term unemployed

This Leeds City Centre project is primarily concerned with improving access into education for long-term unemployed adults. It is an action research/outreach project that works both in hostels within the inner city of Leeds as well as in the increasing number of day centres and drop-in centres located in the city centre. Outreach work with long-term unemployed adults assists individuals in a supportive environment to re-examine or examine for the first time the contribution that education makes to their lives. For many, it is no more than a fleeting diversion in their lives, whilst for others it represents the start of a new direction towards self re-assessment and the development of useable skills and expertise.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

The aim has been to make contact with and develop relevant educational provision for 'those long-term adult unemployed whose life experiences (homelessness, institutionalisation and isolation) prevent them from having a realistic expectation of early re-entry to employment or mainstream education or training'. It should be clear that this particular audience is difficult to reach and presents a major challenge to adult educators.

A REPLAN grant of $45,000 covering the two-and-half years from September 1984 has provided the project with resources on which to build.

EXPERIENCES

After two years' work, over 30 courses have been organised for different groups of long-term unemployed people in hostels, day centres, the Resettlement Unit and the Centre Against Unemployment. These can be categorised as follows:

- Educational counselling and general discussion groups;
- Interest and leisure courses (eg Art, Music, Video, Hairdressing);
- Women's courses (Assertiveness Training, Self Defence);
- Alternatives to Employment (eg 'Setting Up Shop' – a course on co-ops and self-help).

The project has offered provision of opportunities to long term unemployed adults so they may pursue and develop a wide range of courses which are initially of interest and relevant to them, i.e. education for everyday living. In so doing, this may lead to increased confidence, personal interest, satisfaction and stimulation and possibly educational advancement and progression. It has also provided opportunities for individuals to analyse their own situation and the way in which it might be improved.

Research and evaluation is an essential part of the project's work and is integral to its success. Evaluation and monitoring is essential for critical reflection, before, during and after particular phases of work. This is an aspect of work which is often ignored in practice by adult educators. Perhaps more important is the requirement to be responsible to the needs of the project's consumers.

Evaluation of courses is undertaken in a number of ways: these include workers' monthly reports, tutors' curriculum plans, tutors' post-course reports, meetings between development workers and tutors, development workers and students, the workers themselves and class registers.

In their course plans, tutors are expected to supply information on their general aims, specific objectives, week-to-week class content, teaching methods and desired results. Class registers provide information on numbers attending, the students' age, sex, unemployed status (whether registered and whether long-term unemployed) addresses and their educational background. Registers can also provide us with a student's reasons for leaving – if known – it could be to a job or onto a course in mainstream provision. Clearly, considerable sensitivity is necessary in gathering such information and tutors are expected to build up a relationship with their students before doing so, and they should also explain why the information is needed.

LESSONS LEARNED

As the work has developed, the staff on the project have come to recognise that whilst many individuals face similar problems (isolation, poverty, loss of dignity, status, stability and above all, self esteem) their responses vary a great deal and therefore educational programmes must be tailored to individual need. In spite of their position many adults display remarkable creativity, resilience, sensitivity and individuality.

It must be recognised that work with the long-term adult unemployed is time consuming and demanding. The identification of educational need within an individual who

feels alienated from education as well as society in general is not a superficial task for the tutor and development worker. It requires sensitivity, understanding, patience and above all the ability to interpret signals messages from adults. Evidence to date indicates that many adult educationists are ill-equipped to respond in this way, and this has profound implications for the initial training and on-going staff development of tutors.

Notions of curriculum framework and work with the adult unemployed do not develop in isolation within NIACE REPLAN projects but rather extend within a local authority across a range of related educational activity. Mention should be made therefore of the emerging network of opportunities being established within the Leeds authority for unemployed adults. This network does represent a significant development in no small measure due to the 'tracing effect' of the project on other provision. Due to outreach work and the setting up of courses in a familiar environment to individuals, many participants do go on to use the established city centre drop-in facilities and mainstream area provision. It cannot be stressed too often that an enjoyable and purposeful educational experience within a framework in which the individual feels secure can have a variety of successful outcomes.

It is a necessity of the project to work together with staff in those hostels and centres where they are active and involved. From the beginning the workers have helped to raise the educational awareness potential of such staff, who may in their turn be invaluable as agencies of recruitment and referral.

It was recognised at an early stage in the project that short courses were not always appropriate in day centres and residential hostels, as they raised within groups of students expectations which sometimes could not be fulfilled. There have been occasions when individuals have been frustrated that no real ongoing educational provision had been made. The project has determined its focus in developing long-term provision in key areas where courses have been running for well over a year. It is essential that work developed in these settings is not lost once the project ceases. It is hoped that Art and Music courses which have been running at the Resettlement unit will be continued by the LEA, and also a cookery/discussion group course at Mount Cross, a Salvation Army women's hostel. However, it must be recognised that many adult education providers are currently faced with difficult dilemmas. For the LEA it may be a question of whether to cut one successful and popular class in order to experiment in other areas.

The project has had considerable success in courses and guidance work undertaken at St Ann's Day Centre. The project has encouraged this voluntary organisation to apply, together with two probation hostels, to the ALBSU Local Development Projects Unit for a two-year grant. Similarly, educational guidance and counselling work undertaken at St John's Probation Hostel has been met by the LEA through education for ex-offenders. However, recruiting part-time staff with appropriate experience and qualifications has proved to be very difficult.

Art class in Leeds

The project has been able to organise a selection of short courses at the Leeds Trades Council Centre Against Unemployment. These courses have supplemented the Centre's established programme, and have been negotiated with Centre users. The project has also helped towards planning and running a regional Unemployed Centres Users Day and has organised groups of users to attend residential courses for the unemployed at Northern College. Some of these courses (in particular Women's Assertiveness) have successfully become self-running, with ongoing support given by the project worker. It is hoped that resources will continue to be available through the Unemployed Centres budget for negotiated courses.

Given that the project is about assisting adults to make choices and to take responsibility for their own learning, it follows that the staff and students are more and more developing a 'social change/action' model to their work. Such an implication needs to be constantly endorsed locally by elected members within the authority, as well as being regularly monitored and reviewed by staff and students. Enfranchisement through education of adults means that control is no longer vested in the educator.

Further information from the Field Officer, Yorkshire and Humberside Region.

9. University of Leeds/Harehills Housing Aid

Learning opportunities for Asian women

This project is a joint venture between a voluntary agency – Harehills Housing Aid – in an inner city multi-ethnic area of Leeds, and the Pioneer Work Project at the Department of Adult and Continuing Education, University of Leeds. It has concentrated primarily on provision with different groups of unwaged Asian women in the area.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

The aims of the project were:

- to examine ways in which existing provision, eg through LEAs, could be built on by utilising additional flexible resources to provide learning opportunities primarily but not exclusively for unwaged Asian and black women;
- to extend inter-agency working between statutory and voluntary agencies in the area;
- to examine ways of utilising and building up contacts through voluntary groups.

A REPLAN grant of $35,000 funded the project from March 1985 to March 1987.

EXPERIENCES

The grant was used to employ two part-time workers sharing the equivalent of one full-time post, and also to pay part-time tutors' fees and basic administrative costs. There were problems with staffing: it was essential to appoint at least one Asian woman worker, and this took several months; and two of the workers, after establishing contacts and developing valuable work, left because they were offered full-time permanent posts elsewhere.

In spite of these problems much valuable work has developed mainly because the project was able to build on contacts and trust which LEA Asian outreach workers and Harehills Housing Aid had established previously.

Since there are eight main languages in the Harehills area of Leeds, most courses have been organised in a combination of English and one or two Asian languages. The courses which Asian and black women have found most useful fall into two categories:

1. General information about health, personal financial issues including welfare rights information, and educational opportunity available to older mono-lingual women in their own languages;
2. Careers information and work and study experience to younger women who are encouraged to see their bi-lingualism as an asset.

The following examples illustrate what has developed in practice. Most groups have wanted short courses (ie approximately 6-8 weeks duration) but there have also been day courses and follow-on courses:

- Welfare rights in Urdu; welfare rights in Bengali and English (several courses);
- Introduction to computing in English and Urdu; computing in English and Punjabi (several courses);
- Women's health in English, Bengali and Urdu;
- Asian men and women, careers options in English, Bengali and Urdu;
- Home schooling in Punjabi;
- Setting up an Asian women's centre in English, Urdu, Punjabi and Bengali;
- Basic home maintenance in Punjabi and Bengali;
- Health and nutrition issues in Bengali.

Monitoring and evaluation has been of central importance from the outset.
Several methods have been employed:

Pre-course monitoring: Outreach work to meet potential students and discuss with them what kind of courses they would like and how they would like them presented, for instance, which language should be used.

Monitoring of courses: Registers are kept which include information on age, gender, unemployment status, length of time unemployed and educational background. In addition to the register, project workers are present at each session and discuss progress with both tutors and students.

Follow-up work: Follow-up entails maintaining contact with individual students and groups to establish outcomes and further needs.

On the basis of the above, workers have made monthly reports which have been discussed at Management Committee Meetings. In addition to this process, individual students have been interviewed at length and in depth to assess their feelings about courses they have attended. This work has led to the qualitative analysis of past practice and future planning on the project.

Apart from the sponsoring organisations (the voluntary agency, Harehills Housing Aid and the University Pioneer Work Project) close working relationships have been developed with LEA workers. The LEA is also formally represented on the Management Committee. In addition an extremely wide range of voluntary and statutory organisations in the area have helped organise and plan courses. These include advice centres, churches, Sikh temples, and various Asian women's groups (eg a Bengali women's group); also schools, the Careers Service and East Leeds Women's Workshop.

LESSONS LEARNED

The project has shown that active and persistent outreach work is essential to attract people who would not normally use adult education. Moreover, there are major teaching problems when dual-languages are used in groups which have widely differing abilities, ages and aspirations. This project has been doing innovative work with bi-lingual courses; most courses have to have two tutors, one with a specific area of expertise and one with language skills. In addition, publicity and teaching materials are not readily available in languages other than English.

It is also clear that creche provision is essential if large numbers of potential women students are not to be excluded.

The short-term nature of the project itself also caused problems, with staffing and with planning for continuity. Yet research and monitoring indicates that women have used these courses as a stepping stone to other opportunities. Some have gone on to college courses while others have progressed onto courses organised by agencies such as East Leeds Women's Workshop. In addition, according to the women themselves, group discussion has broadened their perspective and provided crucial information for them over such issues as welfare rights, housing problems and health issues.

Furthermore there has been evidence of education being utilised as a tool for collective development. This is illustrated by the work with the group who were exploring the possibility of establishing an Asian women's centre.

Further information from the Field Officer, Yorkshire and Humberside Region.

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10. Northern College

The Dearne Valley Project

The Dearne Valley project was designed to bring together three South Yorkshire adult education bodies: the Northern College, the Yorkshire South District of the WEA, and the Division of Continuing Education at the University of Sheffield. The Dearne Valley crosses three South Yorkshire authorities (Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham) and is made up of towns and villages straddling the river Dearne. Whatever indices of social or physical health are employed for the Dearne, a picture emerges of under-resourced communities, suffering the consequences of profound economic dislocation.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

The project aimed both to facilitate community development and to encourage individual development.

Community objectives

- to encourage greater participation of the unemployed in the day-to-day routines of their own communities;
- to encourage the formation of new community groups and to assist existing groups to develop their activities.

Personal advancement objectives

- to build students' confidence and motivation;
- to develop programmes which encourage independent learning, self-direction and control;
- to improve the employment prospects of individual students.

A REPLAN grant of $31,000 was made to cover the two-year period from April 1985 to March 1987.

EXPERIENCES

The project had one full-time field worker, supported by two supervisors – one from the Northern College, the other from the WEA. The success of the work depended on the closest co-operation with established groups in the area – the three supporting institutions, and many other groups and agencies (for example, church-based organisations, enterprise centres, women's support groups, community and adult education services in the three local authority areas, the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children).

In the first twelve months of its operation, the project

- organised 27 courses/events which attracted approximately 332 participants;
- combined residential courses in Northern College (14 in all) with study programmes based in the Dearne Valley towns and villages (13);
- recruited both the employed (32%) and the unemployed (57%);
- recruited people from all age groups within the Dearne Valley communities, including retired men and women (9.8%);
- recruited high percentages of the long-term unemployed (63% of males and 91% of females);
- recruited unemployed people from all social classes/occupational groups;
- recruited a high proportion of men and women who left school without any formal educational qualifications (67.6%);
- recruited roughly equal numbers of unemployed men and women;
- recruited a high proportion of men and women who had not previously participated in adult education classes (45.1%) and an even higher proportion of educationally inactive unemployed people (52.6% of the men and 54.5% of the women);
- recruited large numbers of unemployed men (42.1%) and unemployed women (50%) who had not previously involved themselves in voluntary community organisations;
- organised a diverse range of courses ranging from creative writing classes to courses for school governors, from understanding unemployment classes to courses on video making, from courses on women in the community to local history and book production classes (and others).

The project has also been instrumental in stimulating more general initiatives in the Dearne. Several new community groups have been formed; groups which were in danger of disbanding have been given a new lease of life; financial support has been secured (from a national charity) to encourage community development projects; an extensive inter-related network of groups, agencies, and local authority services in and between the three Dearne Valley local authority areas has been encouraged. The project has stimulated its

members to produce journal articles, a booklet and an educational video on the impact of unemployment in the Dearne. Unemployed students have already produced one local history booklet and a second is currently being written. Teaching packs for use with unemployed groups are currently being developed, as is a display of the photographic work of a number of Dearne Valley unemployed groups.

LESSONS LEARNED

The project was founded on a carefully researched socio-economic profile of the Dearne Valley communities. This proved invaluable, providing the field worker with a data base which gave her some purchase on the Dearne communities and also statistical information which could be fed into the courses. Similar programmes of work with the unemployed would benefit from being equally well-grounded – and followed through by very tight monitoring procedures.

However, it must be admitted that a two-year project serviced by one full-time worker, which is committed to programme delivery and to rigorous monitoring and assessment is unrealistically demanding. It is almost inevitable that one or other wing of the project will be partly sacrificed. In the event, the project's failure to budget for part-time tutorial assistance was probably a mistake.

Outreach activities with the unemployed have to be organised imaginatively and sympathetically. In this project many outreach activities have been successful because the field worker modified the nomenclature of formal education and used pubs, clubs, a local vicarage, and students' houses as launching sites for more structured educational activities. Maximum publicity through the media and press releases, through college prospectuses and educational literature, through public announcements, posters and library displays have all proved important. However, in the last analysis the success of the project has depended upon inter-personal contact and the communication channels of informal community networks.

Successful work in the Dearne communities has been followed up by weekend or one-week periods of residential education. Residential study has proved particularly important both in consolidating the identity of community groups and in increasing the enthusiasm of unemployed men and women for educational activities.

Small scale, small-budget projects can stimulate enormous levels of excitement, unlock untapped human potential, galvanise groups and organisations into new levels of activity, forge co-operative working relationships where none have previously existed. However, it has to be said that the Dearne Valley Project remains small-scale and its overall impact patchy. It may be that the benefits it has offered to the adult unemployed exist at the level of temporary palliatives; it may be that unrealistic expectations have been released. To a certain extent such outcomes are tied to the nature of the adult education service in the Dearne when the project comes to an end: the Barnsley and Doncaster authorities have already agreed to finance a one-year continuation of the work, and it is hoped that the Rotherham authority will follow suit.

It is unusual to conclude that all parties involved in a new initiative have benefited from it. Yet this (with some qualifications) appears to be the case in the Dearne. The WEA has established a presence in an area from which it had been absent since the second world war; the Northern College too has extended its work in the Dearne Valley and will continue to build on the gains made by the project; the College, the WEA and the University have enjoyed a profitable two-year partnership which is likely to provide the basis for joint initiatives in the future; a dynamic and energetic network of groups, organisations and agencies working in the Dearne has emerged, and there is the promise of further growth. The unemployed have exploited the new opportunities offered to them and have provided the local adult education services with some idea of the reservoirs of talent, enthusiasm and creativity which could and should be tapped.

Further information from the Field Officer, Yorkshire and Humberside Region.

11. Northamptonshire Local Education Authority

Informal educational activities for the unemployed

This project was largely based in a TUC-sponsored centre for the unemployed in Hazelwood Lane, Kettering. The emphasis was on raising awareness – by the unemployed, especially the older men and people from ethnic minorities – of the educational opportunities available; and by the educators of the needs and problems of the unemployed in the area.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

The project's aims thus fell into two broad categories.

Internal aims centred on the people who were users of the Centre:

- to support, resource and encourage users' own educational initiatives;
- to facilitate workshops and courses for the users;
- to provide information on, and introduce users to, local education providers.

The *external* aspects of the work involved outside providers:

- to inform outside providers about the Centre and its education programme;
- to gain support for work in progress, and to encourage the siting of further provision at the Centre;
- to act as a focus for a range of organisations working with unemployed people in order to encourage collaboration;
- to gather information about unemployment to identify needs and issues, and appropriate initiatives.

A REPLAN grant of £19,000 over two-and-half years allowed for the appointment of a part-time worker at the Centre.

EXPERIENCE

In practice, the largest part of the work has been to encourage the Centre's users' own activities. Partly because of a lack of funds to pay outside tutors, but more because of a belief in the benefits of self-help, most of the activities in the Centre have originated from users' own ideas, run by users for users. The steps involved are usually:

1. to encourage discussion in the Centre on what people would like to do;
2. to ensure that the ideas that come up are not lost but are put into positive action – perhaps by setting a time and a date for a meeting;
3. to raise with a person who has volunteered to run a group some of the practicalities (such as resources and planning), and offering support as necessary.

In this way the Centre has had courses on a wide variety of subjects, from art to comparative religion, photography to spoken Russian – all drawing on the talents and interests of the users. Similarly, with the benefit of an LEA minibus, users have arranged, and played a large part in organising, a variety of trips – including a day trip to France.

There are times, however, when a more directive style is appropriate. The project worker has been involved in bringing tutors into the Centre, and even in running classes. The art group, for example, had a tutor kindly provided by the local further education college for a term. Then the tutor was withdrawn because of timetabling problems, yet the group has continued to meet and to produce very good work. Other people brought in to lead groups and take 'one-off' sessions have included an unemployed jewellery maker who teaches enamelling, an unemployed law graduate who led a series of sessions on law and politics, a local writer (Raymond Howe), and a professional drama company.

The project is also involved in educational guidance. Besides having prospectuses and contacts available at the Centre, the project worker is also in touch with the County's guidance service – EGAN – for those requiring more detailed counselling. A large part of this aspect of the work is in encouraging people to have their first try at, say, an evening class – and it is gratifying to hear users talking later about their (in one recent example) cookery class, saying 'I never thought I could learn so much'.

As far as the external aspect of the work goes, the first objective has been to spread information about the educational work of the Centre. This has involved events such as the Centre's birthday parties which – among other things – have included exhibitions of users' artwork, photography and sculpture. The Centre also ran a series of 'community lunches' at which a wide variety of voluntary and statutory agencies – including education – were able to find out about the Centre.

Encouraging local providers to site resources at the Centre has proved successful in two instances: a writers' workshop was funded by

Basic Education, and the College provided the art tutor mentioned above. With the project worker acting as a 'go-between', the Centre has also been able to use adult education resources, such as printing facilities and the minibus.

It is impossible to deal with a person's educational needs in isolation from other needs arising from unemployment, and so the project has deliberately sought to keep contact with other organisations which deal with unemployed people. This has happened in three main ways:

1. The REPLAN steering group deliberately included representatives of non-education groups such as the social services, the borough council, a welfare rights advice group and the Volunteer Bureau;
2. The project worker initiated a series of meetings for representatives of the four centres for the unemployed and community centres in the county for sharing ideas, news, and discussion of issues;
3. Informal contact has been built up with as wide a range of statutory and voluntary agencies as possible, including the Manpower Services Commission, the DHSS, adult education area principals, social workers and ministers of the church.

Gathering information about unemployment has until recently largely consisted of observation and informal discussion. However, more quantitative research is now in progress, based on questionnaire interviews with Centre users, and with people in a selected part of Kettering.

LESSONS LEARNED

For many employed people, education has little relevance and, apart from technical qualifications, appears to them unlikely to improve their job prospects. Getting people involved in 'activities' where they can succeed, and where their ideas are accepted as valid, is a first step to overcoming this. Linked to this is the fact that some people are put off if a session is described in terms that remind them of school. Using 'activity' instead of 'course', 'group' instead of 'class' can make a difference.

Working in an informal style, enabling people to make their own choices and decisions can be frustrating, as one of the effects of unemployment on some people is to leave them living from day to day, with little forward planning. As a result, people often do not turn up for classes or meetings in which they have expressed an interest, and need support in putting ideas into action. However, the alternative – to organise everything for people – only carries on a 'de-powering' attitude.

The Centre has problems of lack of space and resources, and conflicts have arisen with users who only came for the coffee and a chat resenting 'their' rooms being occupied by classes. Regular users' meetings at which such feelings can be expressed helped to overcome this.

Several attempts to work with ethnic minority groups have proved extremely difficult, as has encouraging black people to use the Centre. The size of this task was underestimated, and the time that was required to do it justice.

With these provisos,

Within the Centre, the project has led to:

- a wider range of activities and courses;
- greater user involvement in planning and running courses;
- many users recieving information and advice, which in a number of cases has led to take-up of mainstream education provision.

Externally, the project has led to:

- a wider knowledge of the Centre and its work;
- information to local providers about the particular problems facing unemployed students;
- the preparation of an *Unemployment Awareness* pack of resource materials, which aim to help groups to develop an informed awareness of the realities of life whilst unemployed.

Further information from the Field Officer, Midland Region.

12. Wolverhampton Local Education Authority

Bug and Brag

Two workers from the Counselling and Teaching Programme based at Wolverhampton Polytechnic had been working with two small unemployment groups in Bushbury and Bradley since April 1984. Group members became interested in the idea of a project developing social and educational co-operatives and a community research and information base for the unemployed. Whilst accepting that formal educational courses were available to the unemployed, it was felt that the skills and abilities of unemployed people themselves remained a vast, untapped resource.

A woodworking team at BUG with one of their sheds

AIMS AND RESOURCES

The project devised by the Bushbury Unemployment Group (BUG) and the Bradley Redundancy Action Group (BRAG) aimed:

- to establish social and educational workshops run by and for the unemployed;
- to foster community activity by bringing the long-term unemployed together within the community, thus encouraging participation and mutual aid;
- to help members of the community resist erosion of financial, physical and emotional well-being caused by unemployment, by both maximising the use of local authority educational and welfare facilities and creating new initiatives.

A REPLAN grant of £38,000 over twenty-two months followed initial start-up funding of £500 from Wolverhampton MBC.

EXPERIENCES

When BUG and BRAG received their funding in April 1985, they were both based in community centres. Both groups' priority was to establish premises of their own, though both wanted to maintain close links with community and education organisations: and also to recruit new members through personal contact, door-to-door surveys and press and radio publicity. Premises had to be locally based with facilities for meetings, workshops and offices. Suitable accommodation was difficult to find, but eventually BRAG occupied a local authority owned building in a very poor state of repair, and BUG opted for an industrial unit as it was the only suitable building in the local area. The premises occupied by both groups are council owned, so are given rent and rate free – for one group alone this is estimated to amount to about £10,000 p.a.

The REPLAN grant has been used to fund the acquisition and maintenance of equipment, the purchasing of materials and running costs such as telephone, travel and insurance. Both BUG and BRAG also use considerable initiative in obtaining materials from other sources – local businesses have been very helpful in supplying excess or redundant materials from wood off-cuts to benches and vices. The adult education department has helped with a supply of typewriters, desks, chairs and so on. Tutors have also been offered free of charge when specific courses are run (such as car mechanics or first aid).

In attempting to equip and establish the two centres a certain amount of resistance was met with from some local authority officers who had never before worked with an organisation run by unemployed people. The machinery of local authority bureaucracy is slow to work at the best of times and both groups developed considerable skills in perseverence and diplomacy.

Some suspicion was also encountered from some educational organisations at the outset. They are run by and for the unemployed – decisions on finance and day-to-day operation are made at weekly group meetings where each member has an equal say. The idea of unemployed people learning and passing on

skills with the minimum of professional help had to be shown to work. The emphasis on the groups themselves managing the finance and day to day running of the centres was also one which had to be proved.

An Advisory Committee was helpful in overcoming some of these initial difficulties. The intention of both groups was to work with and not compete against other agencies in the Borough, so representatives from a variety of organisations were invited to attend the committee with the hope of establishing a useful dialogue and exchange of information, building on links already forged with people in welfare rights, adult education, trades unions, the Co-operative Development Agency, and Community Associations.

As the groups have become established they have been approached by a number of organisations locally, nationally and internationally. Members from BUG and BRAG have been invited on to various committees to represent the unemployed, including the EEC Poverty Programme Steering Committee, Education Outreach Sub-committee, Education and Guidance Sub-committee, Community Associations, Wolverhampton Network and Welfare Action Group.

LESSONS LEARNED

The emphasis from the beginning has been that, just because people are out of a paid job, it does not mean that they are redundant in themselves. The unemployed represent a diverse group who have a variety of skills and aptitudes which can be of value to the community. By coming together as a group, they can attempt to give a voice to a growing number of people who are largely under-represented as far as needs and aspirations are concerned. Prior to BUG and BRAG's existence, work with the unemployed was dominated by the professionals servicing their needs. Now we are finding that the groups themselves are being approached to offer advice and information on the provision of services to the unemployed.

Persistence throughout that BUG and BRAG should be run by and for the unemployed has been essential. Obstacles were met, but by a process of lobbying and development of support structures, the groups' existence has been assured. The commitment of members and support from local councillors and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education has been invaluable.

Benefits to participants of both BUG and BRAG must be gauged at several levels:

- the opportunity to get out of the house and socialise with people who understand your situation;
- a place to find out about changes in benefit entitlements and so on, and the opportunity to make your voice heard;
- the chance to develop and exchange skills in a variety of activities.

The impact of the groups on other organisations and institutions has been quite marked. Colleges and other adult education establishments are becoming more responsive and sensitive to the special needs of the unemployed. The local authority, having aided the growth of BUG and BRAG, has now committed itself to a policy of supporting other unemployment groups, both by aiding their establishment and giving financial support, and is continuing to fund BUG and BRAG for the next three years. The success of BUG and BRAG was also instrumental in funding being secured from the EEC Poverty Programme enabling the Unemployment Workers Group employees to establish similar groups in other parts of the Borough. Issues which affect the unemployed have been given a higher profile.

The existence of BUG and BRAG has meant that other groups struggling to establish themselves have been able to approach the groups for help and support. This is not only the case locally, but nationally; as their work is publicised, groups from other local authorities and organisations approach both BUG and BRAG and the Unemployment Workers Group in the hope of setting up initiatives along similar lines.

Further information from the Field Officer, Midland Region.

Illustration class at BRAG

13. Birmingham Joint Committee for Adult Education

Out of the house – a programme for unwaged women

'Out of the house' is a course for unwaged women organised by the Birmingham Joint Committee for Adult Education Information and Advice Services. It was planned to meet a gap in neighbourhood provision observed by a group of local workers over a period of six years, 1978-1984. The prime objective was simple and direct: to provide a creative space within which the participants could give some thought to their future life-directions. The course was targeted at local women, particularly those caring for young children.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

The aims were:

- to widen the opportunities of local women;
- to raise their self-confidence, dampened by years of concentrated child care, through sampling new skills;
- to tell them about new opportunities for education and training.

Another key aspect of the course was the constant attention given to quality child care. The course was planned and programmed to take account of the practical consequences to mothers of caring for their children – crying toddlers were allowed into the classroom, the course started and finished to coincide with school times and holidays, and made allowances for disruption caused by the teachers' dinner-time strikes, and illnesses of older children.

The course was funded from November 1984 through to March 1986. Sessions from March 1986 to July 1986 were supported by the REPLAN grant of £6,000 with other funds coming from the University of Birmingham Extra-Mural Studies Department, as well as the Cadbury Trust.

'Out of the house' pottery session.

EXPERIENCES

The majority of the grant was spent on tutor-organiser time, with the second largest amount paying for child-care workers. The remainder was spent on visiting speakers, art tutors and materials. The course was held at the Midland Arts Centre where it had the use of a meeting room, art studios, dance physical activity space, as well as a restaurant. That solved a potential major problem over refreshments and food. Not only did the Arts Centre provide good quality working space without cost, but its creative atmosphere was important in the context of the course being arts-based. The Centre also provided, on site, art-tutors.

The decision to use an art-based curriculum was rooted in earlier successes in informal arts-based work by the field-worker of the Birmingham Joint Committee, who continued to put a great deal of time into this project. The earlier work had involved co-operation with a range of local statutory and voluntary agencies: community schools, local library, the LEA literacy co-ordinator, the health education officer, the Arts Centre and so on. The Joint Committee wanted to continue to utilise this experience, and a planning group was formed to discuss the basic programme, publicity and employment of the part-time worker.

Methodology, from the start, was flexible. This was seen as a 'pilot' course with artistic activities as the foundation: other components anticipated were social and cultural questions, with an emphasis on the position of women in society; basic study skills; an introduction to computers; and information and advice on further education and training possibilities. Initially the course was planned as a ten-week package for different groups of women, but developed into a thirty week-programme for the same group of women.

The course began in January 1985, preceded by a pre-Christmas leafletting drive and visits to neighbourhood centres, schools, mother-toddler groups and community centres. All these visits were repeated in January, and the workers in each were acquainted with the nature of the course. Sixteen women initially applied, and twelve of those finally joined the course and stayed for the full ten weeks. Ten of the twelve asked to re-register for the next term, and completed a third term too. Six of that initial recruitment worked, largely as a self-help group, in the fourth term when the major funding for an attached worker came to an end, and still (January 1987) meet as a self-help group in a local school, following a programme of Health, Community and Women's Studies and operating the school garden as an allotment.

The women recruited were all, save one, from the inner city areas of Birmingham. Several were one parent families, all were unwaged and many in low income families. Family size ranged from one child to six. There were several women of Afro-Caribbean origin and one Chinese. One woman with previous educational opportunity, had, by virtue of the

pressures of caring for her three children, suffered a debilitating sense of isolation and loss of confidence in her ability. Three women had gone on to some other form of education post-sixteen – nursery nursing, SRN, Art College. All the others had left school and worked in shops, bars, as dinner ladies or in factories.

The work done week by week included craft activities, such as screen printing, pottery, creative embroidery, dance, drawing and writing poetry, short stories and dialogues. Interwoven with these sessions were structured discussion groups and critical reading. Homework, whether writing, reading particular literary extracts or evaluating activities, was encouraged. Individual students were encouraged to write more academic essays or assessments as their confidence and interests became established.

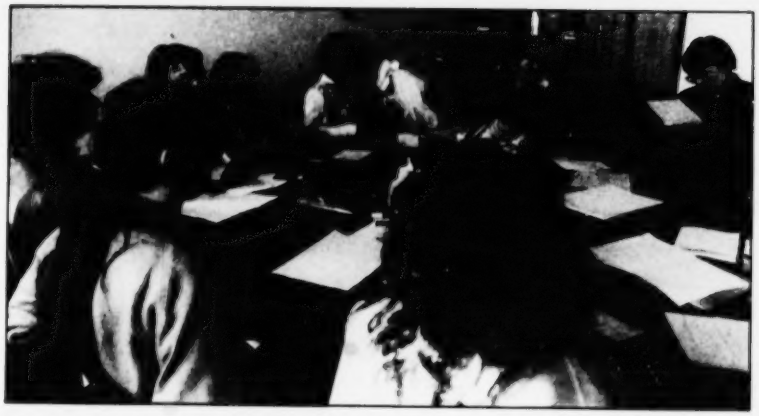
The curriculum was, from the fifth week, discussed between the women. Because of the range of skills and contacts within the Planning Group and from that to the wider network within Adult Education, Further Education and Community Education in the City, it was possible to arrange visits or visiting speakers on most of the topics requested. An interest in the work of school governors led to a group study of Open University teaching materials and subsequently three members became governors of their children's schools.

At the end of the whole year's course two women enrolled as mature students in university – one part-time at Birmingham, one full-time at Durham; one took up a teacher-training access course; five enrolled in pottery courses at the Midlands Arts Centre; two took part-time jobs – one as a secretary to the local church, another as a trainee librarian; and one accepted nomination as a local councillor. Some of the successes were less academic, but still satisfying – a woman who said she could never write anything succeeded in writing one poem and one page of her autobiography! Another woman took legal advice to free herself and her children from domestic violence; three group members began a local campaign to get a nursery class for their school.

Over the year some twenty-two women enrolled on the course. Three became pregnant again and left at the end of a term. Two completed one term then moved house. One left mid-term to move to London. One left, began a university course and could not complete the first term because of family pressures so came back to our course. Three women dropped out of the course and gave no reason, and did not respond to postal contact.

LESSONS LEARNED

Outreach and recruitment, however conscientiously done, still only reaches small numbers of students. Interest and trust in this kind of course provision seems to become established, and grows, by word of mouth through the positive experiences of friends and neighbours who have enjoyed the course themselves.



Discussion groups and direct teaching sessions often incorporated babes in arms!

Course provision on the doorstep might have encouraged less confident students to come and sample what we were offering, but there were students who enrolled, and re-registered for the next term, because the course *was* based in the Arts Centre. That pleasant venue with its purpose-built facilities provided them with the sense of a day out, which was what they wanted.

Recruitment for ten weeks at a time led to problems when new recruits were admitted. The programme built on skills acquired in the previous term and on the social cohesion of the group. Newcomers sometimes felt it difficult to join in with the same degree of confidence as those who had been in from the start. Also, course content had been negotiated with students who did carry-over from term to term and newcomers sometimes found a term's work, while planned by the students, did not have the arts-based content they had hoped for.

It was difficult to insist that students should move on. Students are ready to move on at different rates. It was difficult to keep the balance between pushing people out before they were ready and being seen to be encouraging a static, if cosy, enclave. Every effort was made to encourage the remaining group to take responsibility for its own programme of study, administration and fund-raising, but in practice this has been difficult for them. Organising speakers, telephoning, stationery and postage are expensive; administration is time-consuming. Students on low incomes cannot be expected to meet these hidden costs.

The impact of 'Out of the house' on the local education authority was considerable. A new course, running from September 1986 to March 1987, was funded by Birmingham's education department and is being observed by the area adult education organisers, with a view to using its 'good practices' on a city-wide basis.

Further information from the Field Officer, Midland Region.

14. North Notts College of Further Education, Worksop

Unemployed adults with special needs

The project based at the Work Orientation Unit, North Notts College of Further Education, is a vocational programme for unemployed and disabled adults from the predominantly rural area surrounding the towns of Worksop and Retford.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

The programme is intended for unemployed and disabled adults (over the age of 19) who have not had the opportunity to learn vocational skills, nor realise their full academic potential. It aims:

- to improve 'employability' by giving the students new skills and knowledge;
- to develop in them the social skills necessary to maintain a job and to cope more effectively with life in general;
- to provide social support through group activity, individual work, counselling and guidance;
- to enhance their self-esteem and confidence.

A REPLAN grant of £30,500 was made available over a twenty-two month period: the course lasts for 18 months, and operates on the basis of the extended college year – that is, 46 weeks, between September 1985 and March 1987.

EXPERIENCES

The project has a staff of two, one full-time and one part-time. The initial task was to publicise the programme among the local community, focusing particular attention on voluntary and statutory organisations and institutions working directly with people with special needs – the Retford and Worksop Job Centres and Careers Offices, the Specialist Careers Officer, the District Resettlement Officer, and libraries and the Community Voluntary Servce. The term 'disabled' was interpreted in its widest sense to include physical, mental and social disabilities.

Having established a group of 15 students, the next step was to devise a course tailored round their needs: to provide the necessary individual attention and flexibility, whilst encouraging group interaction and social integration within the college. As all the

Project tutor Lisa Mulcahy (extreme left) with members of her group.

students are unemployed, they come under the 21-hour attendance regulations. A five-phase programme was drawn up.

Phase 1 (4 weeks) – the introductory phase concentrated on creating a group identity, cohesion and a strong sense of tutorial support, while students' needs were assessed.

Phase 2 (9 weeks) and *Phase 3* (21 weeks) – the students initially sampled a range of chosen vocational skills and later specialised in one or two. For these sessions they joined existing colleges classes. Group ethos was maintained by weekly REPLAN course meetings where issues such as health and hygiene, interview techniques and current affairs were informally discussed.

Phase 4 (8 weeks) – this was predominantly concerned with work preparation, though again other pertinent issues were also considered, to develop confidence, independence and social skills, all of which contribute to actually holding down a job.

Phase 5 (27 weeks) – the final phase involves a six-month period of work experience, usually on two days a week. The students can choose the type of placement, or indeed choose not to do so if they do not feel ready for it. At the time of writing, six students have placements in industry, commerce and the public service sector, while still coming to college one day a week.

LESSONS LEARNED

This project is a new initiative, designed to facilitate the exploration of new approaches to adults with special needs, and as such is an experimental and learning exercise. The range of disability within the group includes cerebral palsy, partial deafness, mental handicap, behavioural problems and epilepsy. The wide range of problems has meant that each individual's programme of work has been different; group sessions have involved team teaching as levels range from basic literacy to 'O' level standard. Evaluation is extremely difficult, as so much of the benefit is in the students' individual development, and it will be important to assess the long-term effects of the course.

However, it is clear so far that the strengths of the course lie in:

- the inbuilt intensive support for the students;
- the fact that it is fulfilling a need not met by other provision and is broadening the field of education locally;
- the strong motivation and the low withdrawal rate of the students shows that it is delivering what the clients require (good regular attendance has illustrated the high degree of commitment despite the lengthy bus journeys involved);
- the close involvement and support established with the students' families and the links and contacts with the local voluntary and statutory agencies.

If the course can be offered again the project team would recommend greater community emphasis and the incorporation of a drop-in facility, which is clearly necessary for many of the students. The project has been successful in raising the expectations of the students, and in developing their abilities, while creating greater awareness in the community of the potential of adults with special needs, and it is to be hoped that funding can be found for provision of this kind to continue.

Further information from the Field Officer, Midland Region.

15. Coleg Harlech

Development work in North Wales

This action research project was based at the residential adult college, Coleg Harlech, in Gwynedd, North Wales. The area covered by the project, western Gwynedd, is one of sparse population and high unemployment, with the attendant problems of poverty, poor housing and isolation magnified by transport difficulties and the centralisation of services and resources. Isolation can be both social and cultural in a region which because of its geography and culture is viewed by some as marginal and by others as the 'heartland' of Welsh-speaking Wales.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

The aims of the project were:

- to aid the design and implementation of appropriate and innovative responses to the needs of unemployed adults in the area;
- to encourage contacts between the providers of education and training and others in the area and to promote an interchange of information and resources in order to improve the quality and quantity of provision;
- to develop and build on Coleg Harlech's experience of work with unemployed people.

The methodology was defined initially as:

- *liaison* with a wide range of organisations and individuals both in and outside the educational field;
- conducting some detailed *survey work* and feeding back results to providing bodies;
- running *'events'* for people in the field (providers and consumers) both locally and as part of the larger REPLAN training programme.

The project was funded for two years but had a worker in post for 19 months only. REPLAN funding amounted to £35,500, which included staffing costs (worker and secretarial support), travelling and development work costs. The active co-operation and support of the College and its staff was intrinsic to the success of the project and a steering group with representatives from the voluntary sector, the Local Education Authority, Manpower Services Commission and Workers' Educational Association helped support the work.

EXPERIENCES

The project worker took up post in February 1985 and began the initial work of developing links between providers with a conference, held at Coleg Harlech as part of the wider REPLAN staff development programme. This was a useful start to what was hoped would be a vital aspect of the project – its capacity for contact and liaison work. Much of the success of provision for the unemployed hinges on goodwill and co-operation between those involved. Later activities in this area of work however – notably the establishing, with other interested parties, of the Gwynedd and Clwyd Adult Unemployed Support Network – demonstrated that although the need for contact is there *and* frequently voiced, a stable, pre-existing and comprehensive network of providers is probably an important pre-requisite to success. In a relatively deprived, rural and culturally-distinct area such as that covered by the project, long-term liaison work of a very personal and individual nature, provided by an accepted individual, may be more appropriate. This certainly became the experience of the project worker.

In terms of developing new provision, a pilot survey of student needs was carried out in Dolgellau. Some time later a joint survey with the Holyhead Unemployed Workers' Centre was attempted, to aid the improvement of the latter's provision in the area. It became evident, however, that, with the limited resources of the project itself and without the active co-operation of other providers, properly resourced and willing to pick up the findings and respond, this form of detailed survey work was not appropriate. Fear of raising expectations that could not be met cast doubts on this methodology and it was rejected in favour of a longer-term and more personal interaction between worker and community. Later, when the worker had established a greater measure of contact with individuals and agencies, a number of initiatives which have led directly to development of provision were made possible. These included:

- *direct innovation* – a second chance course at Canolfan Ieuenctid, Caernarvon as a joint venture between the WEA, Coleg Harlech and the Youth Centre;
- *providing specific educational resource to a local group* – The Women's Support Group at Blaenau Ffestiniog. This has led to

the formation of an unwaged women's Writing Workshop; to the publication of the group's writings; and indirectly, through work with the group, to the support of unemployed men in the area in their successful application for planning permission to run a slate quarry on a co-operative basis;

- *support for workers in providing agencies* – giving advice and providing training, offering network facilities and opportunity to develop ideas and practice. This form of intervention proved particularly beneficial to agencies limited by short-term funding, who in normal circumstances would not have the time or resources to create this for themselves. A number of courses, mostly residential, were provided for workers, by the College, and the project has thus been able to influence the development of provision in the area.

Building on the experience of Coleg Harlech directly with the unemployed was less effective. Lack of understanding of the role of the College as a *local* resource and lack of locally provided, appropriate educational experience that would lead naturally on to residential work meant a less than immediate response to this possibility. However, through the existence and other work of the project, potential has now been created for the greater development of this work in the future.

The project worked with a very large number of agencies, educational providers and individuals in the area, as would be expected in a highly rural region with distinct cultural and social attributes. Use of Welsh, as well as English, as the medium of communication was vital to the development of the project. The importance of sensitivity to language must be noted as a critical factor in work in culturally distinct areas.

LESSONS LEARNED

Under-resourced and patchy provision of adult continuing education creates tensions and disagreements about priorities and best practice. However, the experience of the project has demonstrated a number of major points:

- A development budget, enabling response to need once identified, is critical;
- Contact between providers can take a long time to establish but is vital if opportunities are not to be lost and limited resources used to the full in a co-operative way. A number of models of integrated provision in a rural area do exist. However, various activities undertaken under the aegis of the project showed that *specifically local* solutions need to be built into this general approach;
- Recognition that the educational needs of the unemployed frequently originate in non-educational settings should be acknowledged clearly. This applies equally to the development of vocational as well as the more traditional 'liberal' educational provision. In a rural area such origins may be highly localised and this must be accepted and supported;
- Unemployed adults *can* be targetted for educational work provided the experience offered is relaxed, adult, participative and informal and providers recognise the particular problems experienced by the unwaged;
- Distance, scarcity of provision and centralisation of resources should not justify a lack of initiatives in rural areas. Collaboration is possible, can be exciting, and need not deny the distinct contribution of individual providers;
- Development work with the unemployed must be part of a long term strategy and an integral part of adult continuing education, which encompasses an independent educational guidance service;
- Work with the adult unemployed is a valuable way of introducing people to life change through education. Residential adult colleges have a valuable specific role to play in this process.

Further information from the Field Officer, Wales.

16. Canolfan Cennen, Ammanford

Encouraging active participation

This project was based in a TUC-initiated centre for the unemployed in the small mining town of Ammanford in South Wales. The town suffers very high levels of unemployment, and with a large rural hinterland combines problems characteristic of both rural and urban areas. The centre before the start of the project was run entirely on voluntary effort, open daily from 10 am – 12 noon, offering benefits advice and a small programme of courses when funds and voluntary help were available.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

The aims of the project were:

- to build up the range of educational activities on offer at the centre in response to needs expressed and to extend awareness of the centre in the area;
- to develop and enhance volunteer participation in the provision of activities and in the running of the centre;
- to create useful links between the centre and its users and other agencies, and establish the centre more firmly in the community.

The project lasted two years from March 1985 to March 1987, with the worker in post from April 1985. In addition to the project funding of £22,500, which provided for one full-time worker including travel costs, materials and tutor payments, support was provided by the County Council and the District Council, who provided and maintained running costs for the building. The project had a voluntary management group.

EXPERIENCES

The methodology chosen centred on the active participation of centre users, informality, freely negotiated activities and outreach work. The first job was to strengthen links with the volunteers already working at the centre and to enlist their aid in a programme of publicity and contact with the community to find out what local people wanted from the centre. Press and radio coverage, surveys and much personal contact began the process. A policy of opening the centre doors to make it a resource for self-help groups in the area was also adopted, to encourage a sense of identity with and support for the centre. This was very successful, providing a much needed 'home' for several groups who were then able to meet regularly and whose interest spilt over into what was happening at the centre, with a consequent gain in volunteers and students.

A range of small, informal learning groups was set up covering a large number of activities. Some of the courses were very specialised and these were run in conjunction with other organisations. Examples included Family Relationships (with the help of the Probation Service), Welfare Advice (with Welsh Housing Aid) and Back to Work taster courses (with the WEA and LEA). All courses were set up only after consultation with users and as they reached a natural end they were replaced with different, newly negotiated provision. In some instances the worker simply acted as a resource helping groups decide their own needs, providing information and support and pointing them in the right direction for tutors. No course was kept on for its own sake, although many were repeated after a break and many provided a painless stepping stone to further, more conventional provision, with the referral and continued support being handled by the centre. Good relations with other agencies, particularly educational, were critical in making this referral system work. For many centre users this has been an essential lifeline and one without which they would not have taken their studies further.

Maintaining the benefits advice role of the centre was seen as essential and was extended with the help of specialist organisations such as Welsh Housing Aid. The training of volunteer advice workers and use of volunteer staff in a multitude of roles was continued throughout the life of the project. This has not been without its difficulties and persistent problems. After eighteen months of the project, a users' group was set up. It is hoped that this will be the focus for continued support after the project ends, and an assurance that centre users will be adequately represented on the management group in the future.

The project worked with a large number of agencies both in the voluntary and statutory sectors, educational and non-educational. There was a particular stress on developing links with agencies within the town itself, from the local police to Job Centre staff. These links were seen as critical in a tight-knit community and essential to success as well as intrinsically helpful and supportive.

LESSONS LEARNED

The centre provides valuable personal and educational support to an increasing number of people in the Ammanford area. It has also helped to provide opportunities for volunteers but recognises that voluntary interest and effort has a limit and that volunteers have a way of disappearing just as they perhaps become most useful. Any organisation running with the heavy support of volunteers requires an equivalent investment in paid staff to support and sustain the voluntary side. The project has also shown ways of making possible entry into formal education or training by underlining the importance of the following in particular:

- choice;
- informality in the early stages;
- 'taster' courses on home ground, followed up by accurate further information and guidance as required and continued support for the 'fledgling' student, never underestimating the need for that support.

Some of the lessons of the project may be familiar but are perhaps worth re-stating:

- Friendly, relaxed, informal and supportive are key words, but these also require skilled, expensive and sometimes exhausting effort from the workers;
- Giving adult students the confidence and skills to make constructive criticism is better than letting them 'vote with their feet';
- Volunteers are expensive in paid worker time;
- Loss of interest may have more to do with worrying about the rent than whether provision is badly planned. Sorting out these problems may take up much of an 'education' worker's time;
- Time is structured differently for the unemployed – 'nine to five' may have little meaning, as do 'terms';
- In a rural area, collaboration between providers is vital, resources are too thin on the ground to defend individual territories;
- In a tight-knit community, credibility and trust are fragile plants which take time, energy and strategy to nurture.

Further information from the Field Officer, Wales.

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17. Forest of Dean Centre Project, Gloucestershire

Co-operation in a rural area

The Forest of Dean in West Gloucestershire is a rural area suffering severe unemployment as a result of two periods of industrial decline. In the fifties and early sixties, coal mining in the Forest ceased; in the seventies and early eighties there was a steep decline in new technology and light manufacturing industry. By 1986 the unemployment rate in the area was 17%.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

Educational opportunities for adults in the Forest are provided by the Royal Forest of Dean College in Cinderford. In Lydney, in 1985, an unemployed workers centre – Forest of Dean Trade Council Centre – had recently been set up. The aim of this project was to encourage these two organisations to co-operate in developing opportunities for unemployed adults in the Forest. The project intended to focus on:

- improving access to college courses;
- strengthening networks between the unemployed workers Centre and other local agencies;
- developing educational opportunities in the Centre itself;
- working with other rurally-based groups to meet educational needs.

A REPLAN grant of £30,000 over the two years April 1985 to March 1987 enabled a project worker to be seconded from the College in Cinderford, to work from a base in the unemployed workers Centre in Lydney. Additional help was available from the Gloucestershire Educational Support Grant for some specific activities. Some facilities were also available at the College, and there was some extra funding for educational initiatives at the Centre.

EXPERIENCES

Work began in the summer of 1985, concentrating on publicity for the Centre and dealing with enquiries as they came in. A guidance service at the Centre advised unwaged people about College courses and enrolment procedures, and negotiated new and specific provision as demand arose. Staff development at the College went hand-in hand with this. Meanwhile, at the Centre, people with special craft skills – for example carpentry, motor mechanics, design and architecture – were encouraged to help others who wanted to learn a craft so that they could become self-employed.

The project worker helped to create a formal structure for linking educational development to economic and social development. A group known as FEAD (Forest Enterprise and Development) was set up to promote a community-needs-based approach to education. This comprised Gloucestershire County Council and its ESG worker, the Forest of Dean District Council, Manpower Services Commission, Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas (COSIRA), Glos Rural Community Council, the College, The Volunteer Centre, Community Arts Project and the Trades Council.

The project worker also began to develop links and alliances with Forest-based organisations in the outreach aspect of the work – a day hospital, a day centre for the mentally handicapped, the Adult Basic Education Service, other unemployed workers centres, the Co-operative Development Agency, the Probation Service and so on. Interesting and difficult new areas of work sprang out of these contacts. When a major factory in Coleford closed towards the end of 1985 the project worker became immersed in giving educational support and guidance to the redundant.

In 1986, by way of FEAD, the project was able to obtain funding from the MSC for College-based retraining in response to the major factory closure. An 'Employment Opportunities Programme' was launched (which recruited 44 people), followed by 'Work Related Skills' (which attracted over 50 people and was over-subscribed).

At the Centre, 16 people joined a computer literacy programme, and other activities now included photography, rock school, and women's woodwork. A summer camp was held, and a caravan advice service piloted. Work continued on a video, 'Positively Unemployed', planned, shot and edited with other unemployed workers centres.

When the County set up an educational advice and guidance service, the project quickly established links with it.

Work also continued on advising unwaged people about courses going on at the College. In 1984-85 (before the project started), 12 unwaged students had enrolled at the College; in 1985-86, 116 unwaged students enrolled; in 1986-87, 250 unwaged students enrolled. This is the largest proportionate increase in Gloucestershire.

LESSONS LEARNED

Over the two-year period, advances have been made on all the original objectives.

> "The educational needs of unwaged people now have a higher profile. The College now identifies provision and response to unwaged adults as a priority area, and is implementing an Adult Education Unit, creating senior posts to develop work and requesting extension of the secondment from the County. Via FEAD, voluntary and statutory bodies are now co-operating on initiatives to assist unwaged people on education and employment, and the local MSC is now persuaded of the value of part-time modular training opportunities under the 21 hour rule as a form of access to further education."
>
> Forest of Dean Project Worker

Because the project began early in the life of the FDTC Centre it became central to the Centre's activities. It had the considerable advantage of access to the College by the use, on secondment, of a member of the College staff to run the project – contacts in the institution were already in place and the project worker knew the system, where to go, who to see and how to effect change. A close working relationship with the County ESG worker achieved good support at County level. The County ESG worker and the project worker were Secretary and Chair respectively of the NATFHE County Liaison Committee, which proved strategically useful. Outreach was successful in working with existing helping agencies – it led to many benefits in terms of Centre use, access to further education and informal learning opportunities.

There were some problems, however. The project worker had to build from scratch; there were no significant numbers of Centre users at the outset, so there was little in place on which to capitalise. Strong and effective Centre management structure could have assisted in the co-ordination of the project with other activities, but there was little 'on the ground' support in the first year, beyond that given by Centre users. In-house communications were weak. The result was that the work of the Centre was perhaps too much dominated by the project.

The project was built on a sound partnership between the College and Forest of Dean Trade Council Centre but other organisations involved include:

1. Transport and General Workers Union
2. National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE)
3. Gloucestershire Probation Service
4. Gloucestershire Social Services
5. Gloucestershire County Careers Service
6. Coleford House Day Hospital (for ex-psychiatric patients)
7. Foxes Bridge Day Centre (for physically handicapped people)
8. Lydney Pensioners' Action Group
9. The Adult Literacy Service
10. Manpower Services Commission
11. Co-operative Development Agency
12. DHSS and UBO

The immense value of making strong formal links with other statutory and voluntary bodies (via FEAD) cannot be stressed too strongly. This made it possible to co-ordinate multi-agency work with common aims and established the role and value of education in the economic and social strategy for the rejuvenation of the Forest.

Further information from the Field Officer, South and South West Region.

Women's woodwork at The Cut.

Work related skills course at Royal Forest of Dean College.

18. Restormel Adult Education Centre, Cornwall

Open Learning at St. Austell

This project was based in an annexe of the Mid-Cornwall College of Further Education in St. Austell. It was hoped that the work would benefit not merely the town of St. Austell itself, but also the wider district of Restormel, a rural area with above average unemployment.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

The aim was to establish an Open Learning Centre which would break with the traditional pattern of adult education – courses, classes, tutors, registers – and instead provide a place where unemployed people could drop in for educational guidance, advice and counselling, and follow a learning programme of their own choice at their own speed and in their own time. The project emphasised personal and social development as one of its key aims, and set out to provide an atmosphere of mutual support and conviviality. It was also hoped that the Centre would encourage isolated unemployed adults who lived outside the town to take up distance learning opportunities.

The project ran from June 1985 to March 1987 with a REPLAN grant of $18,500, with an additional $225 matched by a contribution from the European Social Fund.

EXPERIENCES

A part-time tutor counsellor (with clerical support) was appointed in July 1985. She then set about organising the Open Learning Centre, equipping it with learning materials (which included a computer and video), and designing appropriate publicity. She also recruited volunteer help to assist students in their learning.

The Centre opened to the public in October 1985, for twenty hours each week, from 9 am to 1 pm Monday to Friday. It offered a variety of subjects on an open access basis: English, mathematics, sociology and French (all from pre-'O' level to 'A' level), computing, keyboard skills, human biology and advice on how to set up a business. During the first year 125 students took part (37 men and 88 women). Students heard about the Centre from a number of sources, but mainly 'by word of mouth' or 'from a friend'. Seventy had no qualifications beyond CSE and 68 had been unemployed for more than one year. Eighty-three were aged between 26 and 60 years. These figures indicate that the Centre was successful in attracting those unemployed people who do not usually become involved with 'traditional forms of learning' and that success itself was a major factor in encouraging more people to use the Centre. By the end of June 1986, 34 of these adults had succeeded in gaining employment.

Students who enrolled had clear expectations – they wanted a job, or failing that, a course that would lead to a qualification for a job. The role of the project worker was crucial both as a counsellor and as a person who set the right tone and atmosphere in the Centre. Initial counselling was very important – the students often had fixed ideas about subjects.

> "Many people feel they ought to know something about computers . . . others wanted to take 'O' levels because they were unaware that other qualifications exist . . . Counselling plays an important role in this context."
>
> Project worker

Counselling and guidance were built into the role of the project worker and into the framework of the Centre. Mutual support between students, particularly the support the regulars were able to give to the newer members, was crucial in creating a relaxed and informal atmosphere.

Open learning provided a flexibility which formal provision could never match. Students could drop in when they wanted (though computer time had to be booked in advance).

Matthew Taylor MP visiting the Open Learning Centre

This was particularly important for those women who had to fit in their learning around their family commitment. The presence of a creche at the Centre was also important.

> "The absence of timetables and the use of self-study materials allows those who want to, to quietly get on with their study, but also gives the isolated ones a chance to mix and share experiences."
>
> Project worker

The project created good links with local agencies such as the Cornwall and Devon Unemployed Resource Network (CADURN), the Job Centre, Careers Service, Physical Handicap Rehabilitation Centre, the Adult Basic Education Service, and the public library. The College of Further Education was not formally active in the project, though individual lecturers did take an interest in its work.

LESSONS LEARNED

The key lesson learned from this project was undoubtedly the value of open and informal-based learning with good counselling and advice. Unwaged people with few or no formal qualifications found the atmosphere and style of the Centre very rewarding. The social aspects of the project were as important as the formal education dimension.

Whilst the project demonstrated the worth of open learning, it was not as effective in promoting distance learning as a way of meeting the needs of those in isolated rural communities in mid-Cornwall. There were two main reasons for this. First, the success of the Open Learning Centre at the College drew resources and time away from work on distance learning. Second, it seems likely that unwaged people have special problems with distance learning. When people were working in isolation without the framework of support which the Open Learning Centre provided, their commitment to study was more difficult to sustain. They lacked the confidence to overcome the practical problems. If unwaged people in rural areas are to benefit from adult education, they need more support within their own immediate community.

Students in the Open Learning Centre felt the benefits for them were gaining qualifications and jobs; having a place they could identify with; having the opportunity to meet other people, particularly other people 'in the same boat' as themselves. The project also received many enquiries from other parts of the country, and in Cornwall there was pressure for Open Learning Centres to be made available in other places.

Further information from the Field Officer, South and South-West Region.

19. The Folk House, Bristol

Incidental learning research

Incidental learning has not been studied before, so it needs to be clearly defined to distinguish it from other forms of learning. The dictionary definition of 'incidental' is an incident occurring naturally or casually out of any situation. 'Incidental learning', therefore, may be defined as learning which is incidental to a particular situation, which arises casually and is neither planned, structured nor directed. This clearly differentiates it from all forms of curricular learning including the less orthodox 'open', 'independent' and 'self-directed' learning where the curriculum persists, even if negotiated or self-defined.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

This project set out to research incidental learning and its significance in the learning process. It was felt that what students picked up incidentally from other students reinforced what they learned in the classroom and increased their confidence. Conversely, if the opportunity for incidental learning was missing, the educational experience would be less satisfactory for the student. For those who have negative previous experiences in the classroom, the supportive element provided by incidental learning could prove crucial for their enthusiasm to stay with the course. In increasing understanding of how significant incidental learning is, it was hoped that the research would point to new teaching methods especially useful for the needs of the unemployed and other groups who have previously largely stayed away from existing adult education provision.

A REPLAN grant of $10,000 funded the project for one year, allowing for the appointment of a part-time research worker and covering administrative costs.

EXPERIENCES

To find out how significant incidental learning exchanges were for students, it was decided to use three methods: a *questionnaire* backed up by *observation* of the classes surveyed, and *participant observation* in some less orthodox open learning situations. The survey was carried out at an adult education centre with standard non-vocational provision, and the participant observation at a community association with adult education provision aimed at the unemployed.

Ten courses were selected, with a total of 237 students. Of these, 176 completed their courses and 61 dropped out. Of those completing, 107 returned questionnaires. The dropouts were sent a slightly different questionnaire and half returned them.

Students completing the course

The responses show that the overwhelming majority of completing students took part in incidental learning exchanges and that the exchanges (73%) were mostly about the course. In reply to the question of how useful the incidental learning exchanges were to students, 71% said they found them important or very important, and only 29% found them unimportant. In analysing the results, a slight tendency appeared for more of those in lower status jobs and those with lower educational attainment to value incidental learning exchanges. However, the more significant fact is that the majority of students from all backgrounds found incidental learning exchanges useful.

It was assumed initially that if the tutor encouraged students to ask questions and put them at their ease, then less value might have been given to information from other students. As it turned out, most of the tutors on the ten courses encouraged an informal atmosphere and 102 of the 107 completing students found their tutors approachable. Yet, despite this, students still put a high value on incidental learning exchanges. It seems that testing one's newly acquired knowledge informally on fellow students is important, no matter how accessible the tutor.

Dropouts

When dropout responses were compared to the responses of those who completed the course, there was a significant percentage difference between the two.

Question: Did you find that informal discussions with fellow students helped reinforce what you learned in the classroom?

	Yes	*No*
Completing students	83%	17%
Dropouts	52%	48%

Question: During breaks or practical classes, do you find you can help others to understand what the teacher has been saying?

	Yes	*No*
Completing students	68%	32%
Dropouts	23%	77%

Question: Do other members of the class help you to better understand what the teacher has said?

	Yes	*No*
Completing students	61%	39%
Dropouts	22%	78%

It appears that more dropouts than completing students failed to interact in incidental learning exchanges. From this it should be possible to make a strong correlation between lack of interaction and dropout. However, when asked, students gave illness, domestic or work pressure as their main reasons for leaving the course. But students with similar pressures stay committed and finish the course. The main difference between the two is that the dropout is more liable to be a non-interactor. It may be that this lack of interaction gives them less commitment to the course, that lack of confidence to take part in incidental learning exchanges becomes a real handicap that saps commitment and leads to dropout.

Whilst observation showed that not all non-interactors lacked confidence, some being self-sufficient students with a previous high level of educational attainment, it was clear that most non-interactors lacked confidence and the social skills needed to join in incidental learning exchanges. These students came largely from the lower income groups.

Participant Observation: Open and Flexible Learning Systems

Three Open Access/Learning groups were observed. They were held in a community association in a working class area of the City. The groups were provided specifically for unemployed/unwaged people. They were an open craft group, an open access group with facilities for car mechanics, woodwork and computing, and a local history group. Observation showed that:

1. Learning was self-directed and proceeded at the pace of the student, not the tutor. In this case, the tutor is a facilitator of the students' needs rather than a traditional teacher;
2. Interaction and mutual help between students was actively encouraged;
3. The classes were continual, with only minimal breaks for holidays.

Because the courses were flexible and continual, they could be joined at any time, so students could introduce friends and family into the group. Students working at a pace not determined by others felt less pressure. They were less embarrassed about not knowing so much, or about not being at the right stage, and therefore less defensive and more likely to interact. In this atmosphere the student's confidence is increased and a high incidence of incidental learning exchanges occur with very positive results.

LESSONS LEARNED

The research has shown that incidental learning is a very important part of the learning process, that the lack of opportunity for incidental learning exchanges can result in unsuccessful classes, while a high frequency of incidental learning exchanges reinforces the curricular learning taking places in the classroom for the vast majority of students.

Facilitating the opportunity for incidental learning should be an important element in course planning.

However, whilst it is clear that most students benefit from incidental learning exchanges where they can informally test their newly acquired knowledge, it is also clear that some people lack the confidence and social skills for this type of exchange. This group have special needs which the more open and flexible learning situations seem to meet. In these situations non-interactors are freed from the fear of not keeping up. They are thus less likely to be defensive and more likely to interact. In doing so, they will learn from others with different levels of skill and progress more quickly. Observation has shown that where the conditions are good for the establishment of long-term groups with flexible learning patterns, then incidental learning exchanges will occur with very positive results for students who would normally have difficulty in interacting.

Further information from the Field Officer, South and South-West Region.

20. Weston-Super-Mare College of Further Education

A programme of skills training

The REPLAN project at Weston College of Further Education was integral to the development of a coherent, modular programme for the unemployed at the College, eventually comprising the START Programme, Community Programme linked-training, RESTART Courses, and College mainstream provision. Contributory to the success of the scheme was the collegiate approach the College adopted and the fact that the College made this work a priority.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

In September 1985 the College received funding for a REPLAN project to provide short skills-training modules for the unemployed and to look specifically at:

- recruitment procedures;
- teaching style and modes of delivery;
- initial and ongoing counselling and guidance.

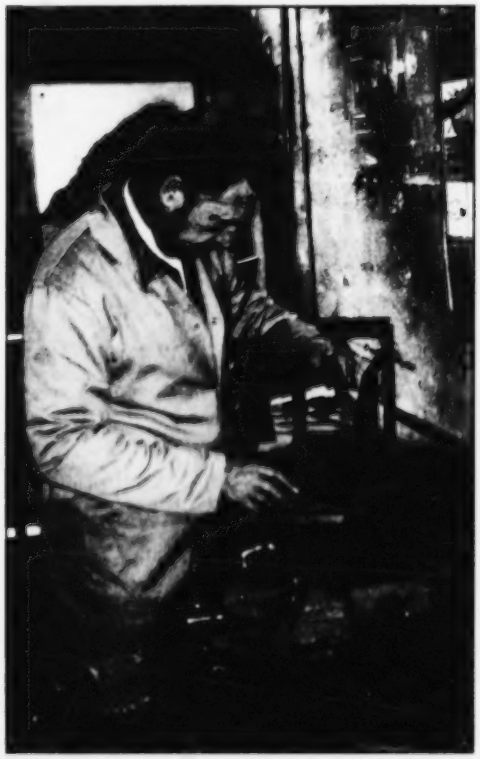
The REPLAN grant was £16,000 for fifteen months, from September 1985 to December 1986, allowing for the appointment of a project co-ordinator at the College.

EXPERIENCES

Since there was concern that unemployed people would not be attracted to a further education college the project initially concentrated a lot of effort on marketing and publicity. The project team developed a network of contacts; visiting people from key agencies and organisations who might have any links with unemployed people. They designed publicity to be as simple and eye-catching as possible, circulating it by post to a long list of organisations who had any contact with the public, and by hand to all the contacts in the network. They sent press releases to local newspapers, TV and radio. As well as this they mounted an Information Day for the unemployed to find out what skills unemployed people wanted.

The College also set up a Steering Committee for work with the unemployed, inviting key members from the local community to take part; its terms of reference being to advise and support the College, to promote activities within the College for the unemployed, and to help monitor and evaluate provision.

A series of meetings was held with the departments of the College responsible for delivering the programme, where it was



Participants constructing wheel ramps on the Motor Vehicle Engineering course at Weston.

accepted that teaching style was very important and that modules should be short, practical and project-based. It was agreed that tutors would adopt a student-centred approach, encourage negotiation of the content of courses, and should be prepared to offer ongoing counselling and support for the participants, many of whom had been out of formal education for some time.

The success of the first of the modules caused the College to take a radical look at the way it provided training for the unemployed. In early 1986, Avon Training Agency had agreed to fund training for unemployed people as Community Programme workers. As a result the College proposed a START programme offering a flexible format of roll-on roll-off skills workshops. This, combined with a modular programme of short courses in specific skills, would offer an integrated programme of training opportunities for the unemployed.

By Autumn 1986 the College was offering a range of 26 options comprising drop-in skills workshops and short courses in both specific skills and work preparation. Every participant had considerable time for counselling and guidance on entering the programme of training and was able to choose from a range of options, up to a maximum of 21 hours weekly. Part of the college co-ordinator's role was to provide this initial guidance and counselling. Apart from establishing a point of contact in the building for the new student, and 'breaking the ice', she was able to dispel worries and help individuals define their aims more clearly. Students were invited to complete an individual profile recording past experience, personal goals and choice of options. The profile was updated as and when students changed their programmes. This helped the organiser to follow people through their time at the College.

The REPLAN project acted as a catalyst for other provision in the College, including the Manpower Services Commission funded START programme, and RESTART courses. In the Autumn of 1986 the College began to look at the possibility of introducing alternative modes of provision for the unemployed by setting up Open Access workshops covering business applications, electronics and information technology.

By November 1986 around 700 people had been through initial counselling on the START programme. 350 were attending courses with a further 250 on a waiting list. A general evaluation form was devised, though groups were encouraged to design their own if they preferred. A questionnaire was sent to anyone who dropped out of courses without explanation. Feedback was generally positive with participants saying how they gained in confidence, enjoyed the experience, and would like to develop their skills further. In some cases it was possible to take people onto existing mainstream courses to work towards nationally recognised qualifications.

LESSONS LEARNED

> "In common with other providers for the unemployed, we feel we have started a snowball which seems to grow ever bigger. We have been amazed to the response to the whole programme. Whereas we felt initially that we must publicise widely in order to get a response, we now find that we have been guilty of 'oversell'. We have long waiting lists for the more popular options with the result that the programme does not 'roll' as it was intended."
>
> Project worker

What was most encouraging was the response within the College, from the departments delivering the options. All were fully committed to the provision and saw it as part of their total programme. Tutors devised courses with flexible, modular formats and introduced more varied, vocational options into the programme. Participants constantly dropped in to the co-ordinator for guidance, negotiation of their programme, advice on further training or jobs, or just to chat. Such personal feedback was invaluable: this counselling facility was vital to the success of the programme.

Lack of creche provision, however, no doubt prevented some women from attending. Another drawback was the saturation of the College's human and equipment resources. This led to a consideration of offering some options in the evenings or at weekends. The main problem, however, concerned long-term planning. Funding for many of the College initiatives was short-term, which not only created uncertainty for the students on the waiting list, but also meant development was difficult. If long-term funding were available, three areas of development suggest themselves:

1. INSET activities, providing training for staff involved in provision for the unemployed so that they may become more adaptable in the way that they deliver courses with an open-ended curriculum;
2. More modular syllabuses along the lines mentioned previously;
3. more research into the area of access of the unemployed into general further education provision and the use of modular study along the lines suggested by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ).

Further information from the Field Officer, South and South West Region.

21. University of Southampton/ Hampshire Local Education Authority

Outreach and participation

The Southampton project set out to contact unwaged and unemployed adults through a variety of outreach methods, to work with them to identify their learning needs, and to cater for those needs in co-operation with other agencies in the area. The project is a joint venture of the Department of Adult Education at Southampton University and the Southampton Institute of Adult, Youth and Community Education, and operates in the West part of Southampton, an area which includes five large housing estates with a total population of approximately 70,000. In January 1985 the unemployment rate was 12.4%, with large numbers of unwaged people including many single parents.

Designing posters and looking for jobs, Respond.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

The four original aims of the project were:

- to adopt a range of strategies to learn about the education needs of unemployed adults in Southampton;
- to develop guidance and counselling services especially directed towards unemployed people;
- to develop an outreach approach which would plug into existing neighbourhood networks;
- to work with unemployed people in such a way as to develop their existing skills and abilities.

Underlying these aims was the broad objective of increasing the involvement of the main providers of education for adults in work with the unemployed and unwaged.

The project started in January 1985, with a REPLAN grant of £51,000. The funding covered a two-year period, allowing for the employment of a full-time project worker and (for 18 months) two part-time neighbourhood workers.

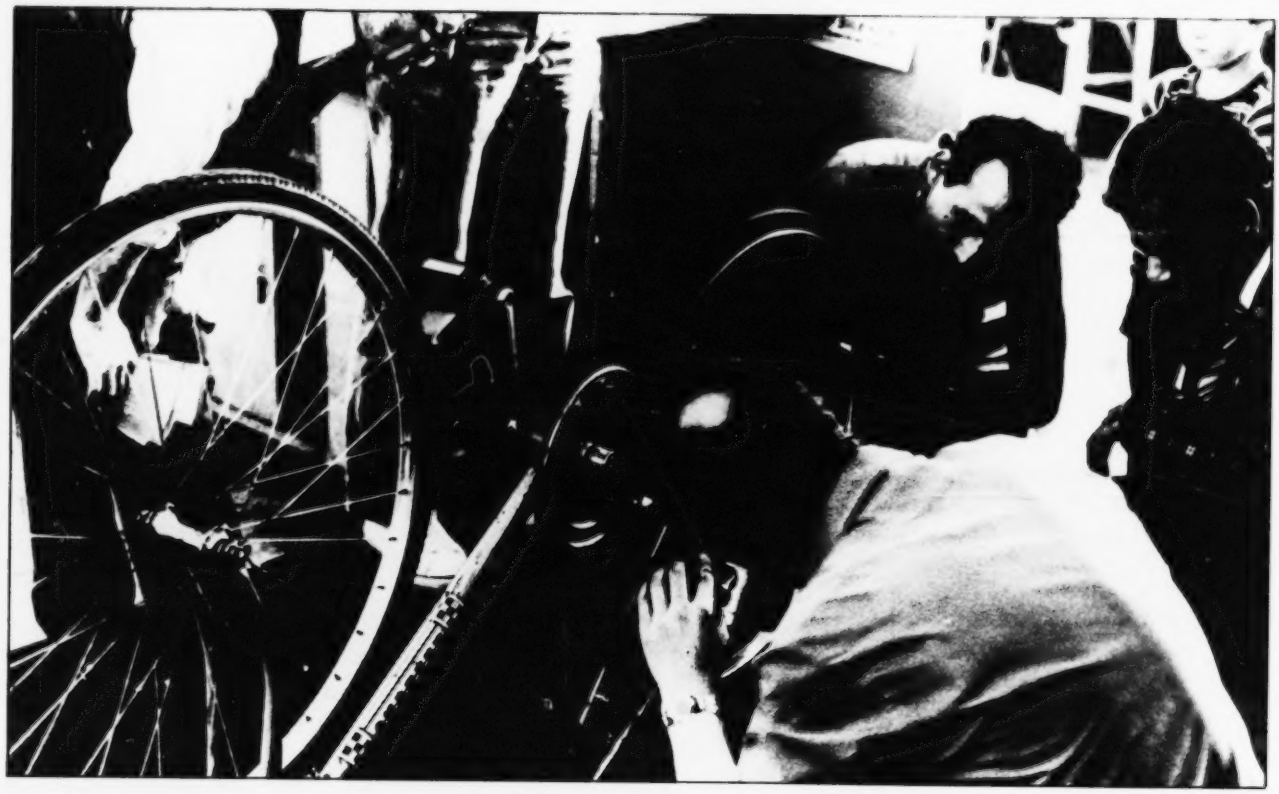
EXPERIENCES

The project was based at the Western Adult Education Centre, where a learning exchange scheme was initiated, which became known as the RESPOND base. The balance of RESPOND's work changed as the project continued, but in general it was open on Mondays to Thursdays, from 10 am to 3 pm, and offered facilities for typing, computer work, photography, cooking, gardening, art and craft, sewing, woodwork, bike workshop and general study support. The programme was open access, but included some organised teaching sessions, educational guidance, welfare rights advice and open meetings where users could take decisions about how the base should be run. As well as activities at base, four contact points were set up in the different housing estates.

In the area as a whole, the project adopted a network approach, making outreach contacts with individuals as well as with a variety of community groups and organisations in an attempt to develop a better understanding of the needs of unwaged adults and how these needs could be met in an educational context. The three workers each had an outreach role in a specific neighbourhood and each established a local unwaged group. A number of educational guidance points were set up in local libraries as well as at the RESPOND base, at Job Centres and at existing enrolment centres for adult education.

Contacts and discussion in the neighbourhoods, in local groups, at guidance sessions and at RESPOND, led to a variety of learning workshops and courses, along with a number of different participatory groups and forums where issues of importance to unwaged adults could be investigated. This included a small participatory research group which conducted a survey and a series of interviews with unwaged people.

Organisations actively involved included Southampton City Council, a confederation of local Welfare Rights groups, the Southampton



Bicycle workshop at Respond.

Education Information Centre for Adults, two Community Schools, the Library Service, Job Centre, Co-operative Development Agency, the Technical College and a large number of local groups.

LESSONS LEARNED

The emphasis of the project from the outset has been on participation. It has shown that participation can take place at a number of different levels – for instance, an organised participative meeting will seem attractive to some people, while others will prefer directly instrumental participation, as in the raising and spending of money. The participative nature of the research elements in the project were very important, demystifying the idea of 'research' and revealing its practical nature.

The project has developed a clearer understanding of the process of outreach work with unwaged adults. There is an initial need to set up some kind of continuing dialogue with individuals about how education can be useful to them and in what particular they would like to learn. A completely open-ended dialogue is clearly unrealistic: the project has found that setting up local discussion groups to investigate available resources is a fruitful way of enabling individuals to identify further learning needs. The project has also shown that formal educational advice is unlikely to be as effective with unwaged adults as guidance as a part of wider provision – well researched, but low key.

RESPOND as a learning exchange was able to use people's talents and skills, and helped to enhance confidence and esteem. To be effective, such a base must have good resources and a good organisational structure. If it is not to appear as just another 'drop-in' centre, it needs clear learning objectives. The establishment of the RESPOND base has been an important part of the project; much has been learnt as the project continued. There have been some recurrent problems: lack of creche provision has meant that access was not equal to all unwaged, especially single parents; the presence of adults with special learning needs has deterred some possible users.

Positive outcomes of the project include the continuing existence of several groups with a community focus. Partners in the project have also benefited. Hants LEA has continued funding for RESPOND and resources to develop similar work in other areas of the City. The University has improved links with the City Council and with Southampton Institute; the Further Education Unit at the Department of Education and Science has agreed to fund a programme of action research. The Southampton Education and Information Centre for Adults has the use of the project's resource pack, 'Choices for Unwaged Adults', prepared in detailed contact with the unwaged themselves. Finally, there is a report, 'Outreach Work with Unwaged Adults', which records the experiences of the project.

Further information from the Field Officer, South and South West Region.

22. University of London Department of Extra-Mural Studies

The Billericay Resource Centre

The concept of a centre for the adult unemployed in Billericay, Essex, grew out of the ideas of a Billericay Rotarian, the manager of the Basildon Unemployed Workers' Centre, and the Senior Lecturer in Industrial Relations at London University's Extra-Mural Department. All three organisations had invested time, people and money in the Centre before the REPLAN grant was made.

AIMS AND RESOURCES

The original aim was to provide special services for unemployed adults in an area where a high proportion of the unemployed were managers or executives. Billericay is only three miles away from Basildon New Town, which has an unemployment rate of 14%. At that time, Billericay, with a rate of only 4%, had some 900 unemployed people, about 400 of whom had held managerial-type positions: it was noticeable that the Billericay people did not use the services of the Basildon Unemployed Workers Centre (UWC).

The Billericay Resource Centre (the word 'unemployment' was deliberately left out of the title) opened in September 1984, in rooms used for many community purposes in the middle of Billericay High Street. The REPLAN grant of £15,000 to develop the work of the Centre was made to the University for the period October 1984 to September 1986.

EXPERIENCES

The REPLAN grant allowed for the appointment of a tutor-organiser, who worked with a voluntary early-retired welfare manager from a multi-national company, and with Manpower Services Commission funded staff from the Basildon UWC to provide administrative and organisational back-up. The Extra-Mural Department allowed the Senior Lecturer to work for two days a week at the Centre to supervise its development.

During the opening months the project concentrated on attracting callers to the Centre through extensive and regular local publicity, while at the same time designing, testing and improving services to suit the people who came. The Centre is usually open on Mondays from 9.30 am to 4 pm, and on Wednesdays from 9.30 am to 1 pm. It offers personal interviews and counselling, help over job interviews and the presentation of CVs, and advice on welfare rights – all within a deliberately encouraging and confidence-boosting social atmosphere. During the two-year period of the REPLAN grant about 150 job-seekers called in, and new ones are still coming. Of the first 70 callers, 51 had found employment by early 1986, and most of them testified to the Centre's help. The male/female ratio was about 10 to 1, but more women in proportion had found jobs. More recent figures showed that 15 out of 16 women callers were now in work.

The Centre also runs study courses both for unemployed adults and 'those who wish to use their time constructively'. Courses have been arranged on 'The Psychology of Work', and single sessions on individual firms and industries (with the help of local industries and local government staff). A forum of unemployed callers is held weekly.

There have been three other developments which have grown out of the work of the project, though not originally envisaged as part of it: a woman's group, work with local schools, and the opening of a second centre.

The 'Active Minds' Group Early in 1985 an unwaged woman, with a small child, a professional herself and also the wife of a professional, asked if the Centre could provide some mental activity for women like herself, who were in their own way 'unemployed'. This led to the formation of a women's group which has held a variety of courses and discussions – on literature and society, on childcare and development – both tutored and untutored. Since January 1986 this group has been combined with the unemployed forum, and is still meeting, currently discussing educational issues.

The Schools' Mock Job-interviews Programme At the suggestion of an unemployed manager, unemployed and retired managers use their interviewing experience to talk with school-leavers, help them to complete sample job application forms, and then conduct individual 'mock' interviews. Two managers work together, one interviewing, one assessing. Over 150 such interviews have been held since 1985 with the two Billericay comprehensive schools, and the pattern is continuing. In 1987 the programme is being extended to seven Basildon schools, with the advice of the Billericay team.

A second Centre In Spring 1985 the Billericay Christian Council of Churches offered free accommodation to the Basildon UWC to start

another centre in Billericay on two days a week. This was opened in July 1985, with MSC-funded staff from the Basildon UWC. It tended to attract unemployed adults who were seeking to improve their skills in typing and computer-work, and wanted detailed advice on social security issues. Since September 1986 it has been combined with the Resource Centre (which is now known as the Billericay Resource and Advice Centre).

LESSONS LEARNED

This report is a record of action in a particular community, and that community has recognised the value of the project and the Centre by taking steps to ensure that its work continues. Although the community has special characteristics which determined the nature and aims of the project in the first place – a low unemployment rate but a high proportion of managerial unemployed, a sense of independence from the larger neighbouring town, a closely-knit community – yet some lessons have been learnt which may be of more general interest.

1. *Assistance with job-finding and coping with the mood of unemployment*
   Though many of the job-seekers knew of, and used, Professional and Executive Recruitment, and many had also enrolled with and spent a lot of money on other job-finding agencies, the work of the Centre showed that careful, consistent, local, sympathetic and intense personal counselling coulld be valuable, even for experienced managers. There were few who did not gain from drafting and re-drafting CVs and job application letters under guidance; few who did not gain from mock job-interviews and forum discussions with fellow job-seekers; few who did not find the insistence on a disciplined programme of job-seeking valuable, backed up by a regular series of courses to keep minds active. But perhaps the most valuable service the Centre gave was in confidence-building. This grew out of a variety of factors which made up the 'culture' of the Centre: the location and welcoming nature of the premises in the High Street; the attitude and competence of the staff; the firm policy over counselling; the continuous provision of courses and discussions; the knowledge, as one caller put it, that there was always something interesting going on. All these factors created an atmosphere which callers found attractive, which presented and developed a positive mood, important in facing the challenges of unemployment and in breaking the downward cycle of depression.

2. *Human resources of a community*
   One of the simple findings of the project has been the existence of a reservoir of unused or under-used experienced people in a community who only needed the opportunity given by the Resource Centre's existence and policy to come forward and offer invaluable services. There are national and local organisations which exist to enrol such talent, but the Centre's experience shows that the intensive community-based pattern is very effective in bringing such allies into the network. They were particularly attracted when some specific task, such as the schools mock job-interview programme, was developed.

3. *Service to schools*
   The mock-job interview pattern, using unemployed and retired skilled interviewers, can be repeated in other places. Many schools already have links with the world of work, but the distinctive feature of the Billericay pattern is the extensive nature of the provision for large numbers of school-leavers, bringing the study of employment and unemployment into the school, and using unemployed people themselves as part of the course. The group of experienced managers working with the school can then easily be drawn into other school enterprise projects.

Finally, this project has shown that careful development of a community's network, supported by modest public funding, can attract continuing local support. The original funding, or its equivalent, came from various sources: Billericay Rotary paid for a year's rent of the rooms, and the owners of the rooms halved the rent for a year; the Billericay Christian Council gave free premises for two days a week. the Great Burstead Foundation gave £100 for books; the Shell Community Fund gave £250 for capital equipment. Since the end of the REPLAN funding, the Billericay Rotary has again covered a year's rent, and other voluntary organisations have indicated they will also help; Basildon UWC has underwritten the continuation of the Centre and its staff; the Ford of Britain Trust has made a grant of £2,000; and the Billericay Christian Council has promised a grant of £400.

Further information from the Field Officer, London and South-Eastern Region.

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The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education has established a Sub Committee under the Chairmanship of Professor Paul Fordham of the University of Southampton to oversee its REPLAN work. The following are members for the current triennium (1985-88)

Professor Paul Fordham
Chair

Mr Will Bee
Greater London Association for the Disabled

Mrs Joan Edwards
Welsh Office Education Department

Ms Susan Fox
Educational Centres Association
Principal Morley College

Mr Peter Fulford-Jones
Department of Education and Science

Mr Peter Gedling
Chief Education Officer
Dorset County Council

Ms Liz Johnson
Confederation of British Industry

Ms Lucia Jones
National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education

Mrs Pat Keen
Resources Manager Standlope Centre
Greenford Middlesex

Mr Peter Lister
NIACE Vice President
Leader Coventry City Council

Ms Andrea McIver
Workers Educational Association

Mr Graham Smith
Education Adviser West Glamorgan
County Council
Nominated by Welsh Joint Education Committee

Mr David Fowler
Manpower Services Commission

Ms Pat Turner
National Industrial Officer General
Municipal Boilermakers and Allied Trades
Union
Nominated by Trades Union Congress

Ms Elizabeth Worthington
Further Education Unit